



# IMPACT REPORT

— MARCH 2020 —  
to MARCH 2021 —

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Intro to El Tímpano</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Meeting the challenge of COVID-19</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Impact</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Our team + organizational growth</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Where we go from here</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Get involved</b>	<b>19</b>

# MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER

Dear community,

Starting in early 2020, COVID-19 was the story. A year later, it still is. The sickness, the loss, the unemployment, the remote schooling, the protests for social justice, increased gun violence, and a crisis of food and housing insecurity.

Through it all, El Tímpano's mission has been to not simply cover the course of the pandemic, but to change it. Because unequal access to news and information is itself a part of the COVID-19 story. Lack of trustworthy information, you could say, is a preexisting condition, factoring into testing access, vaccine distrust, enforcement of renter protections, and narratives about the pandemic, who is affected, and how.

By filling a gap in Spanish-language news and information, and providing a platform for more than a thousand



**By filling a gap in Spanish-language news, we could change the story.**



---

## MADELEINE BAIR

Founding Director

---

Latino and Mayan immigrants to share, in real time, their experience of the pandemic, we could change that story.

And together, we did.

2020 was not only a year of loss. It was a year of resilience. Of coming together and supporting one another in new ways. In this report you'll see how El Tímpano documented that resilience, facilitated community connections, and expanded our work and team thanks to our community reaching out and supporting us.

As we embark on year two of responding to the economic and public health crises that COVID-19 has wrought, we are also building community resilience that will support El Tímpano, our audience, and our wider community for years to come. To all of you who are on this journey with us—our community members, partners, and supporters—thank you!

With love,

Pedro Sanchez shares his experience of the high cost of housing with El Tímpano's community microphone in 2018. Credit: Ekevara Kitpowsong



## EL TÍMPANO'S MISSION



Our vision: Equitable and impactful local news, information, and civic engagement



Who we serve: Latino and Mayan immigrants in Oakland, California



Our process: Designed in deep collaboration with community members



Our methods: SMS reporting, a community microphone, in-depth journalism, and partnerships

# INTRODUCTION TO EL TÍMPANO

**E**l Tímpano—Spanish for “eardrum”—informs, engages, and amplifies the voices of Oakland’s Latino and Mayan immigrants. Through innovative approaches to local journalism and civic engagement, El Tímpano surfaces community members’ stories, questions, and concerns on local and national issues, and provides information relevant to their needs.

Latino and Mayan immigrants are Oakland’s fastest-growing communities. Yet for years, Spanish-language media in the Bay Area had dwindled, and inequities in local news and civic engagement

widened. As Radio Bilingüe’s News Director Samuel Orozco, an Oakland resident, told El Tímpano in 2018, “There is a great need for local news and information for the immigrant community of Oakland.”

El Tímpano was designed in collaboration with hundreds of residents who told us they wanted to see more local news to help them make informed decisions and have their voices heard. From 2017 to 2018, we sat down with two dozen community leaders and 300 residents to hear what they want to see in local Spanish-language media.

They told us they want news that helps them take action rather than leaving them in fear. They told us that health, housing, and education

were among their top concerns. And they told us that texting is a better way to reach them than websites or email; many lack home computers.

El Tímpano’s approaches are shaped by the insights and ideas we heard, and by ongoing conversations with our audience. By designing local news from the ground up, in collaboration with those long marginalized by traditional media, El Tímpano is forging a new vision and a replicable model for inclusive journalism and civic engagement.

# MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF COVID-19

## Addressing health disparities through equitable and accessible information

It was mid-March when Bay Area counties became the first in the nation to announce stay-at-home orders to halt the spread of what was quickly becoming a global pandemic.

El Tímpano shared the news via SMS and invited our community to respond.

There were questions on whether the banks were still open and the busses still running. And there were stories that foretold the devastating impact COVID-19 would have in the months to come.

**“They’re laying people off, but the bills and rent can’t wait,”** wrote one resident on March 17.

It was the first of hundreds of messages we would receive as the year and the

pandemic progressed.

Through our Spanish-language SMS reporting platform, we heard from dishwashers and hotel cleaners who lost their jobs immediately. Grocery store staff about what it was like to be an essential worker. Mothers who cut down their work schedules to be home with their kids. Sons who took their elderly parents to the hospital with the virus. Neighbors who volunteered to help those less fortunate put food on their table.

They wrote to El Tímpano to seek guidance, connect with financial support, find food distribution sites and COVID-19 testing locations. And they wrote because they were invited to share their story. They knew that their experience, their voice, mattered.

### OUR PRIORITIES

El Tímpano was designed to address inequities in local news and information, and with the pandemic, those inequities became deadlier. Our response focused on these priorities:

- **Expand our SMS community** to ensure that those most impacted by COVID-19 have the news and information they need to navigate the public health and economic crises.
- **Deepen relationships with local service providers** to be able to connect El Tímpano’s audience to relevant resources and opportunities.
- **Amplify the voices of Latino and Mayan immigrants** so their experiences are heard by public officials, health providers, and the wider community.



 **24**

The number of **food distribution sites** in East Oakland that El Tímpano’s Vanessa Nava visited to sign people up for El Tímpano’s SMS service

 **250%**

The number of **SMS subscribers** for El Tímpano’s Spanish-language reporting platform grew from **400** to **1400**.

### EAST OAKLAND OUTREACH SITES



# IMPACT: INFORM

**D**uring a crisis, the lack of a central, trusted source for news threatens the ability to respond to emergency situations.

This was one of the key findings of El Tímpano's 2018 information needs assessment. In 2020, we saw this truth laid bare. Updates about the virus, policies and programs to prevent its spread, and resources for impacted residents have been almost exclusively in English. Furthermore, without a platform to share their

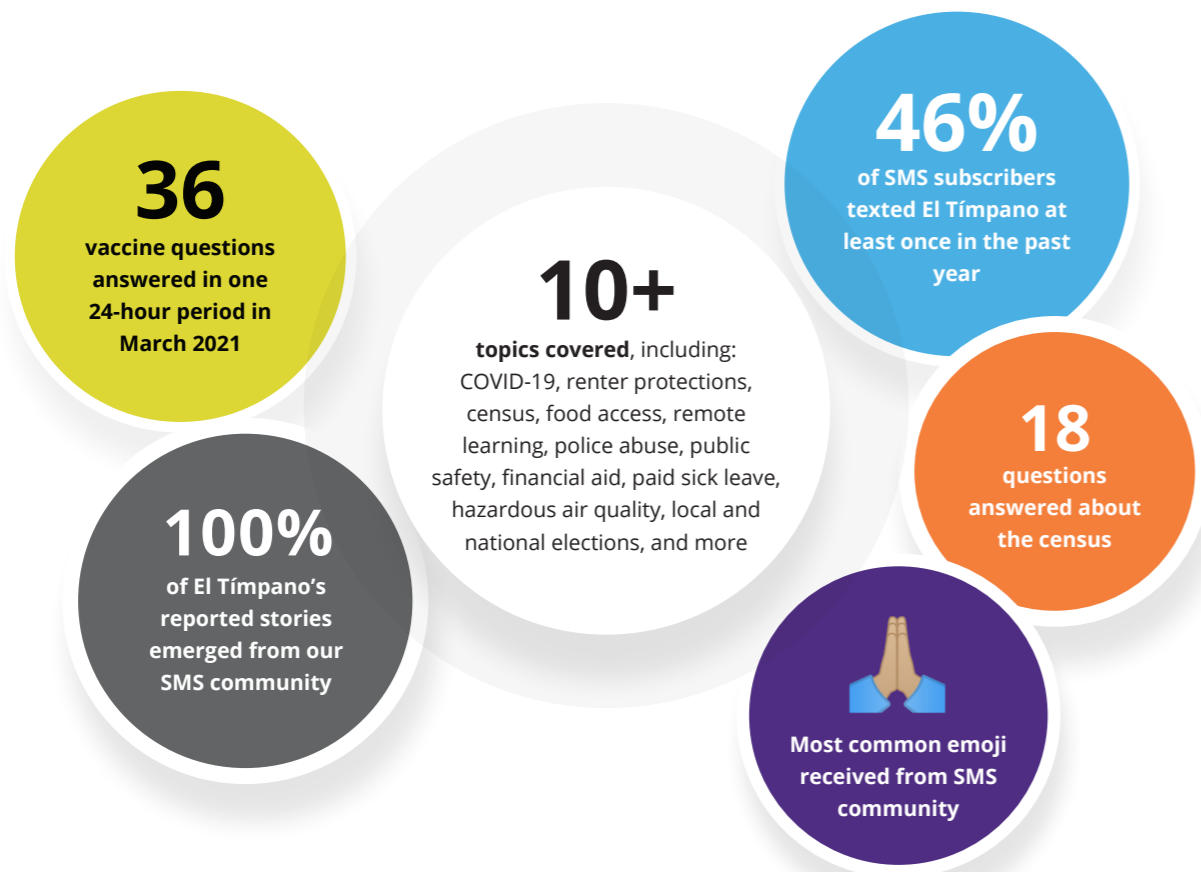
stories, not only are Latino and Mayan immigrants among those hardest hit by COVID-19, but their voices risk being left out of civic conversations and policy debates on the root causes of health inequities and solutions to address them.

El Tímpano's SMS platform—providing news, information, and participatory reporting in an accessible way—became a vital strategy to disrupt this cycle. Subscribers have received news about everything from public health

guidance to explanations of what new renter protection policies mean, opportunities for financial assistance, school reopening plans, vaccines, and more.

Most importantly, El Tímpano's SMS service not only disseminates information. It also provides a platform for subscribers to send their questions, share their concerns, and have their story heard.

Every audience message receives a response, and every question is answered.



## TESTIMONIALS FROM EL TÍMPANO'S SMS COMMUNITY



*Translated from Spanish*

"Thank you for keeping the Latino community informed."

"I am thankful to God for belonging to El Tímpano. Thank you for all of your information."



"I'm very thankful that you have shared this valuable information for the community, and in turn I have been passing it along to people I know."



"Last week you gave me information about the COVID vaccine and today I was able to get my first shot. Thank you so much for keeping us informed."

"I'm not tech savvy, and your information has been a great help."

"When you send me something, I share it. I take pictures of the messages and send them to the people who call me. I say, look, try to do this."

"I received the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine, in large part due to the information that you share with the community. Thank you for your humanitarian work. 🙌❤️👊"

# IMPACT: AMPLIFY

In June, El Tímpano launched a novel partnership with a new non-profit news outlet, **The Oaklandside**. The partnership combines the strengths of both newsrooms to bring the stories of El Tímpano's community to a wider audience.



## With online schooling, Latino immigrant parents fear their kids are being left behind

As schooling transitioned from in-person to online, El Tímpano heard from dozens of parents who had a hard time adjusting. While we connected many with a local organization providing laptops for families in need, it was clear that devices alone were not enough to bridge the digital divide.

[We teamed up](#) with The Oaklandside's education equity reporter, Ashley McBride, to report on why many immigrant parents worried that their children were falling behind.

Our coverage received an even larger audience when the public radio station,



Credit: Harvey Castro

KQED, invited El Tímpano and The Oaklandside to speak about it [on The Bay podcast](#).

As a result of our reporting, one of the parents featured in the story told El Tímpano that she finally got the sup-

port she needed from her child's school. And a local tutoring organization, learning about the barriers to access many immigrant parents face, developed an application form in Spanish as well as a hotline for parents to call to sign their kids up.

## José Martín Aguilar

When José Martín Aguilar and his wife were laid off in March, he had to choose between staying at home and staying safe, or going out to look for other work, despite the risks of getting COVID-19.



Credit: Pete Rosos

Aguilar, a member of Oakland's growing Mayan indigenous community, [explains](#) why it wasn't much of a choice at all.

I told my family, "You guys stay home. I

have to go out to find work to make a living even if I catch the illness."

One reader commented, "In its first-person matter-of-factness, this is one of the most illuminating

stories of the pandemic economy I've read."

A local health reporter tweeted that she hadn't known about Oakland's Mayan community until reading the story.

## Orlando Ruiz

As COVID-19 testing became more widely available, the disproportionate rates of the virus among Latinos came into focus.

[Orlando Ruiz witnessed it firsthand](#), as several members of his household became sick. In a first-person story, Ruiz described how the virus spread in his home, and shared his thoughts on why Latinos had the highest rates of the virus.

“ Thank you for sharing my story. It is something I will never forget from this pandemic. ”

“We're going out. Not because we want to, but because we need to.”

A communications specialist working with Governor Gavin Newsom's office contacted El Tímpano to say:

“We're trying to get a better sense of how different Latinx communities are experienc-

ing COVID, with a special interest in immigrant and indigenous communities. I loved reading this first person narrative from Orlando Ruiz and shared it with the Governor's communications team.”

Ruiz told us, “Thank you for sharing my story. It is something I will never forget from this pandemic.”

## More Oaklanders left sick and in the dark as COVID-19 surges

During the holidays, community members reported to El Tímpano that they had tested positive for COVID-19, but hadn't received any follow-up information or resources from county health workers that they were told to expect.

Their reports led us to investigate, and we were the [first to report](#) that the post-holiday surge in COVID-19 had overwhelmed county health workers, leading

public health officials to scrap the contract tracing procedures they had spent months putting into place.

While reporting this story, El Tímpano provided the resources and information sick families were searching for and couldn't find

anywhere else.

"Thanks to your help, the county sent us financial aid when my whole family got sick," said Maria González, who was unable to reach health officials when she tested positive for COVID-19 until El Tímpano stepped in.

“ Thanks to your help, the county sent us financial aid when my whole family got sick. ”



Credit: Amir Aziz

## Oakland's undocumented community struggles to keep up with rent and bills

The most common question El Tímpano heard from our SMS community throughout the pandemic year was, "Where can I find help to pay the bills?"

Our Health & Housing Reporting Fellow, Héctor Alejandro Arzate, followed up with several undocumented immigrants to learn how they are getting by as bills pile up and government relief efforts fall outside their reach.

[His report](#) describes immigrants skipping meals and moving into crowded conditions to afford rent, while others watch their debt climb into the thousands.

It also points readers to local organizations providing relief to Oakland immigrants. As a result, one reader reached out to donate cash directly to the families profiled in the report.

## Up next: A systems look at overcrowding and health inequities

Thanks to a major reporting grant from Renaissance Journalism, El Tímpano (in partnership with the team at Journalism+Design) launched a six-month investigation to

[dig deeper](#) into the intersection of housing and health.

Watch out for our collaborative coverage in the spring of 2021 on this important issue.

## IMPACT: INDUSTRY-WIDE

Since El Tímpano piloted our SMS reporting platform in 2019 and expanded it in 2020, our work has been recognized, emulated, and taught by peers and journalism schools nationwide.

El Tímpano was described as an "Outstanding Innovation Model" in the 2019 [Latino Media Report](#) published by CUNY's Graduate School of Journalism, and was a finalist for the 2020 [Public Service Award](#) from Local Independent Online News Publishers.

Leaders from more than a dozen news outlets, including major public radio stations, nonprofit news outlets, daily newspapers, and community media networks, have reached out to El Tímpano to learn from our innovative approach.

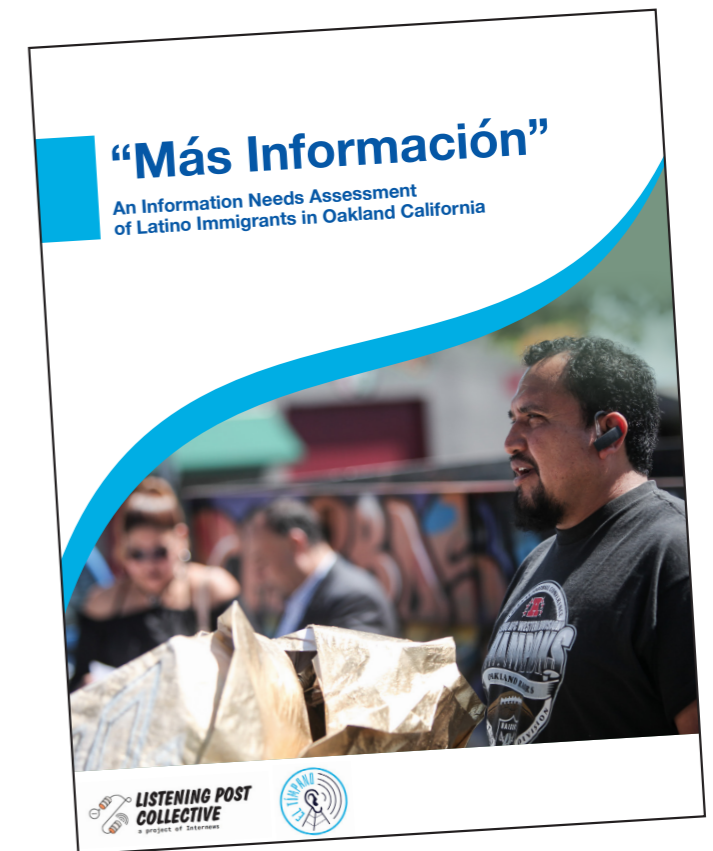
We have been invited to present on our model of community-centered Spanish-language news at the [Latino Media Summit](#), the [Online News Associa-](#)

[tion conference](#), and the [Code For America summit](#), as well as for municipal and community leaders at [Oakland's City Hall](#), the [Oakland Food Policy Council](#), and the [International Rescue Committee](#).

In 2020, we were invited to present to peers at the [National Association of Community Broadcasters](#), [Center for Cooperative Media](#), and [Rochester Democrat & Chronicle](#). Our work was featured in [Niemann Reports](#)

and the [Columbia Journalism Review](#), and in reports by the [Knight Foundation](#), [Google News Initiative](#), [Institute for Nonprofit News](#), and [Democracy Fund](#).

El Tímpano's [Information Needs Assessment report](#) has become a go-to resource for municipal staffers, and is shared regularly by the [City of Oakland's Department of Race & Equity](#) to foster equitable community engagement across agencies.



# IMPACT: CONNECT

One way we evaluate our journalism is by the connections it facilitates:

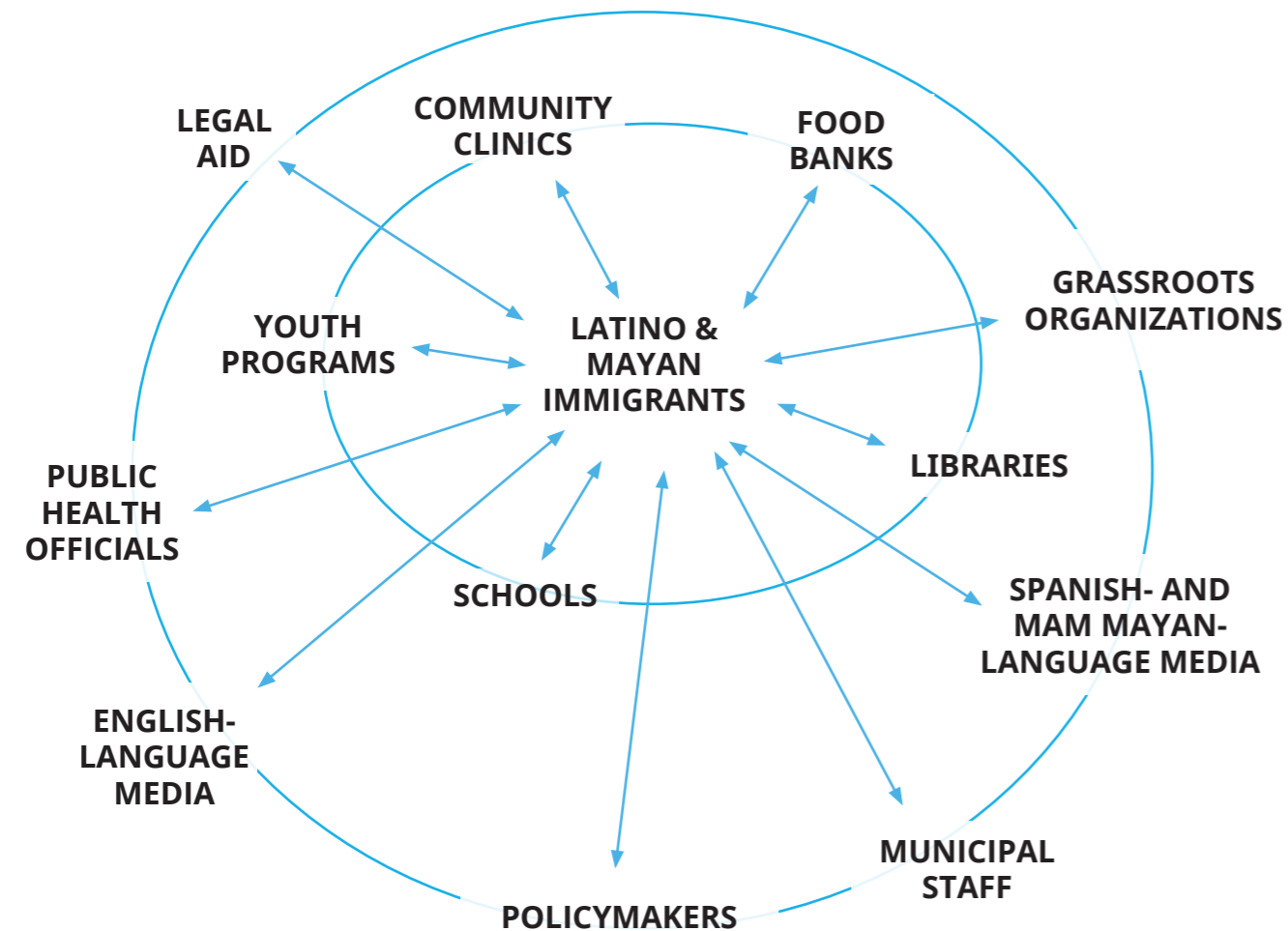
- How connected are community members to local service providers and civic organizations?
- How connected are community members to their elected officials? To their neighbors? To residents across town? Opportunities

ties to volunteer or take action?  
 • How connected are public officials to the concerns of diverse community members? What about journalists?

El Tímpano has invested in building a network of relationships across municipal agencies, grassroots organizations, news outlets,

local service providers, and others. In this way, we can act as a conduit to share information in multiple directions. We can direct community questions to appropriate officials. We can direct residents to non-profits that address their needs. We can bridge media silos. And through these relationships, we can help identify solutions.

## EL TÍMPANO'S NETWORK



Karen Boyd, Director of Communications, City of Oakland

I applaud El Tímpano for their innovation in reaching our neighbors with potentially life-saving news during this global pandemic, helping people get access to COVID-19 testing and vaccines, and cutting through the clutter of misinformation by being a trusted and trustworthy source.



Jacque Larrainzar, City of Oakland's Department of Race & Equity

Helping folks help themselves is a fundamental principle of Racial Equity work. In the times of COVID-19, having an organization like El Tímpano supporting Spanish-speaking residents to stay informed about issues that matter to them and the wellbeing of their families, loved ones, and communities is an important piece in addressing racial disparities in Oakland.



Tasneem Raja, Editor-In-Chief, The Oaklandside

We've collaborated on in-depth reports with El Tímpano that we simply would not have had the insights and community sources to report on our own.



Pete Villaseñor, César Chávez Library Branch Manager

El Tímpano has been instrumental in bringing attention to the lack of reliable media outlets for our growing Latinx and Mam communities in Oakland. Since its founding, El Tímpano has been, and continues to be, an important community partner with the Chávez Branch library.



Aneeka Chaudhry, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency

El Tímpano helps us break down linguistic and cultural barriers and promote health equity through timely messaging and information.



Chris Iglesias, CEO, The Unity Council

El Tímpano's tools and approach have allowed our programs to spread much-needed COVID-19 information and resources to hard-to-reach community members in Oakland. El Tímpano is a trusted source of information, and we look forward to collaborating with them more to ensure everyone in our communities has the information they need to thrive.





Clockwise from top left: Josué Rojas, Mai-Ling Garcia, Henry Sales, Ruxandra Guidi, Adriana Morga, Daniela Gerson, Mario Corea, Marcia Parker, Sophie Lan Hou, and Jesse Hardman

# OUR TEAM AND ADVISORS

2020 was a year of immense growth as El Tímpano stepped up our work and expanded our team to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. We began the year with no employees, and ended it with one full-time director, one part-time assistant producer, and one reporting fellow.

We also formed a 10-person [advisory council](#) to support El Tímpano's leadership. Their backgrounds span the fields of journalism, Spanish- and Mam Mayan-language media, civic engagement, movement strategy, and cultural arts.



**MADELEINE BAIR**  
Founding Director



**HÉCTOR ALEJANDRO ARZATE**  
Reporting Fellow



**VANESSA NAVA**  
Assistant Producer

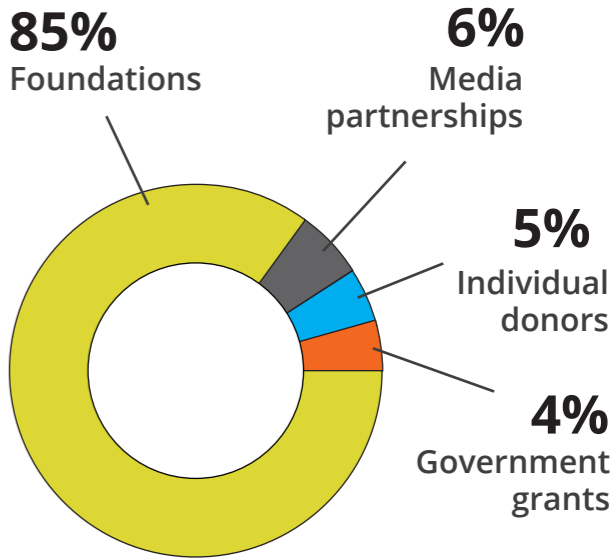
# ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

No proven business models exist to support the sustainability of local, public-interest news outlets serving very low-income communities.

To sustain our work, grow, and thrive, El Tímpano must beat the odds, creating innovative revenue strategies that are aligned with our public service mission.

In 2020, we made great strides in achieving this goal. El Tímpano's expanded team is possible thanks to a growing portfolio of supporters and a diversified revenue strategy.

We won our first core support grants, and



we earned funding from seven new foundations, 68 first-time individual donors, and two novel revenue streams of government grants and media partnerships.

**Thank you to every one of the individual donors, partners, and foundations (below) who supported El Tímpano's impact and growth this past year.**



# WHERE WE GO FROM HERE



**E**l Tímpano made critical progress in 2020 to address inequities in local media. But we're just getting started, and we need your help to serve our community and build a sustainable news organization with the revenue to support it.

Here are some of our goals for 2021 and beyond.

## ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

We need to raise at least \$500,000 from individual donors, foundations, and institutional partners to cover our general operating costs and to make three key hires to oversee our editorial work, community partnerships, and revenue.

## ON THE HORIZON

As we expand our organization in the year ahead, El Tímpano plans to focus on the following initiatives:

- **Promotoras de información: media literacy to combat misinformation**
- **Artist-in-residence**
- **Audience growth**
- **More original & collaborative reporting**
- **Expanded community partnerships**
- **Impact evaluation**

We are committed to continuing to build a diverse team that will be majority Latinx- and/or Mayan-led, reflecting the communities we serve.

Our Editor/Senior Reporter will oversee and expand our original, community-powered journalism.

Our Community Partnerships Manager will expand relationships with local organizations and agencies to grow our audience and identify opportunities to advance civic participation.

Our Revenue Director will focus on growing all of our revenue streams from foundations, major donors, members, and institutional partners.

As El Tímpano grows, we aim to provide a replicable model for media outlets across the country designed to address gaps in local news for immigrant and low-income communities.

# GET INVOLVED

**El Tímpano is built by, for, and with our community. Be a part of it.**

## MAKE A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION

El Tímpano is fiscally sponsored by Independent Arts & Media, a San Francisco-based 501(c)3 organization.

Go to [www.eltimpano.org/support](http://www.eltimpano.org/support) to make a one-time or monthly tax-deductible contribution.

To discuss ways your foundation can support El Tímpano to grow and thrive, write to Madeleine Bair at [mb@eltimpano.org](mailto:mb@eltimpano.org).

An investment in El Tímpano is an investment in the future of local media.

## HELP OTHERS JOIN OUR COMMUNITY

If you work with East Bay residents who would want to be a part of El Tímpano's SMS community, contact us at [hola@eltimpano.org](mailto:hola@eltimpano.org).

## FOLLOW AND SHARE OUR WORK

At [www.eltimpano.org](http://www.eltimpano.org) you can subscribe to our newsletter and read our latest journalism.

On Medium, El Tímpano provides a behind-the-scenes look at how we are developing local news in collaboration with our community. Follow us for the latest from El Tímpano's team and community:

Instagram: [@eltimpano\\_oakland](https://www.instagram.com/eltimpano_oakland)  
Twitter: [@el\\_timpano](https://twitter.com/el_timpano)

## PARTNER WITH US

El Tímpano has partnered with news outlets, individual journalists, county agencies, legal aid organizations, public policy researchers, artists, and others.

If your organization is interested in developing a partnership that aligns with our mission of providing vital information and advancing equitable civic engagement, we'd love to hear from you.