



ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

PETER & ELIZABETH TOWER FOUNDATION

2020



Dear Friend,

It is difficult to fathom the loss and suffering our community, and indeed the entire world, faced in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic took the lives of family members, friends, and neighbors and stretched our healthcare system and social service supports to a near-breaking point.

Social distancing measures created new obstacles between the young people and families we serve and the support they need and diminished the number of opportunities to socialize with peers and attend school.

In the face of what could have been insurmountable challenges, we worked with grant partners and funding partners to spur innovations that ensured community services and supports would go uninterrupted—like Accessible Academics, which harnessed the move to remote learning and worked to expand its reach—connecting members of our community with tutors and teachers from across the country.

As the world changed almost overnight, so too did our grantmaking. In some instances, we quickly transitioned funds for specific grantee programs to general operating expenses. It was this nimble responsiveness to the needs of our grant partners that helped us be their partner as they navigated challenges.

Amidst the pandemic the nation began to reckon with systems of racism and prejudice exposed by the death of George Floyd and resulting Black Lives Matter protests in nearly every major U.S. city. We started thinking about how issues of race and racism intersect with our priority areas and what we could do to increase diversity, equity, and inclusivity. It's an ongoing process.

None of our work last year would be possible without the unfailing commitment of our staff and the guidance of our Trustees. Our staff and leaders are always willing to listen and learn from people on the ground doing the hard work in our community with children and families. It's this spirit of partnership that enables us to make an impact in Western New York and Eastern Massachusetts.

We're grateful to work with our passionate grant and funding partners. Their commitment to young people and families in our communities makes us proud to work alongside them. The work they do is vital in normal times, but the impact they continue to have—even when facing unparalleled circumstances—is particularly inspiring.



Tracy A. Sawicki
Executive Director



Elizabeth C. Tower (1920–2013), *Untitled (landscape)*, 1969
Oil on canvas, 8" x 10"; Burchfield Penney Art Center

FEATURED ARTWORK

As a prolific painter, Elizabeth C. Tower loved everything about art—exploring it, talking about it, and spending time with those who make it. Her artwork was exhibited frequently throughout the 1960s and 1970s but rarely available commercially. Her work, displayed above and on the cover, is also featured on the foundation's website at TheTowerFoundation.org.

WHAT'S WITHIN

This year's Annual Highlights features case studies of the challenges faced by our grant partners due to COVID-19. The case studies illustrate how our grant partners overcame these obstacles through their determination and with our support to deliver services throughout the pandemic.

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As grantmaker, partner, and advocate,
the Tower Foundation strengthens
organizations and works to change
systems to improve the lives of
young people with learning disabilities,
mental illness, substance use
disorders, and intellectual disabilities.

PANDEMIC INNOVATIONS

WORKING WITH ACCESSIBLE ACADEMICS TO ADAPT AND INNOVATE TO MEET COVID-19 CHALLENGES

We're all accustomed to Zoom meetings by now, taking conference calls from the back porch while our children go to school at the kitchen table, going to spin class on a screen, and seeing our primary care provider for a telehealth visit. The COVID-19 pandemic forced all of us to innovate on the fly to maintain some semblance of a normal routine.

This was no different for our grant partners—even those more accustomed to working digitally, like Accessible Academics. The organization helps young adults with disabilities find success in school, careers, and independent living through services that provide academic support, life skills, career guidance, and emotional support.

Prior to COVID-19, Accessible Academics had a work-from-home model. Staff were comfortable with Slack and online file sharing and meetings with colleagues were digital.

The direct support services for young people, however, were often in-person and community workshops were held in public locations. COVID-19 disrupted these much-needed services and forced the Accessible Academics team to innovate. Many in-person services had to quickly move online.

"Our goal was to ensure that our students were comfortable in the transition to remote services," said Anne Showers, CEO. "At first we were concerned that the quality of our sessions would be reduced and that student outcomes would suffer. However, we found the opposite happened."

When innovating, it's important to get the input and buy-in from end users.

To engage people in the process, the organization piloted several platforms, such as Webex, Zoom, and others, and then asked for feedback from students and their families. The unanimous decision was to go with Zoom for its ease of use, accessibility, and collaborative features. To accommodate students and their families, Accessible Academics provided training on how to use Zoom.

Zoom couldn't accommodate every student need and service, particularly those concerning private health information. To handle these instances, Accessible Academics chose a service that meets medical privacy requirements and provides one-on-one sessions if a student wants to discuss a private matter.

Accessible Academics closely tracked student performance in grades and independence benchmarks throughout 2020. All students made significant progress, demonstrating the resiliency of students and staff and remote sessions as an effective service-delivery method. Because of the flexibility and collaborative features offered

by Zoom, several students requested to remain remote when the world returns to “normal”—or as close to normal as we’re going to get.

Going remote isn’t for everyone, though, and many students will be eager to return to in-person sessions. After COVID-19, Accessible Academics intends on using a hybrid model where some services will be delivered remotely and others in-person, depending on the student and activity.

Going remote prompted Accessible Academics to think creatively about everything they could provide to students. Before the pandemic, Accessible Academics prioritized local tutors and mentors. But with the shift online, they were able to think globally about the resources with which they could connect their students. For example, one student interested in a career in animation was able to work with an animator located in New Jersey who worked for Nickelodeon for 20 years.

The pandemic also served as an opportunity to rethink the types of workshops offered. Once limited to meditation and vocational skills, Accessible Academics now offers online workshops in chair yoga, cooking, and baking. The switch to online also increased accessibility of services, with transportation or cost no longer issues. That said, staff are mindful that Internet accessibility can be a barrier, especially in rural areas and low-income households. In these instances, the organization is making special accommodations to ensure everyone can benefit from their services.

“Thanks to the Tower Foundation, we were able to retain our employees until we received the PPP loan. Otherwise, we would not have been able to continue all our services without interruption during the pandemic,” said Anne Showers.

CASE STUDY

MASSACHUSETTS ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC) removes barriers to educational and life opportunities for young people, but the pandemic raised existing barriers and created entirely new ones. With schools shifting to remote learning, children with intellectual disabilities, autism, or learning disabilities lost many of the supports they depended on to succeed in school. Families with Spanish as their primary language felt this loss more

profoundly when schools often provided information and resources only in English.

A Tower Foundation COVID-19 Response grant helped MAC work with dozens of Essex County parents of children with disabilities (40% of whom were primarily Spanish-speaking) to get schools to establish or re-establish the supports their children need. MAC offered virtual workshops to help parents and support professionals understand COVID-19’s implications for special education services.

With a return to in-person classes on the horizon, MAC continues to advocate for children with disabilities and their families.

CHANGING 2020 GRANTMAKING

RESPONDING SWIFTLY TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Since our founding in 1990, our grant partners have made the communities of Western New York and Eastern Massachusetts better places to live for young people affected by intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health issues, and substance use disorders.

Serving a community for 30 years means we know a lot about it, allocate resources that have the biggest impact, and deploy efficient processes that continuously evolve and improve. In the 30th year of our service to Western New York and Eastern Massachusetts, COVID-19 changed everything about the lives of young people in our community. Through the challenges set forth by the pandemic, we played to our strengths—nimbleness, collaboration, and innovation—to establish new ways to serve.

When obstacles arise in our field it's essential to first understand the needs of those dealing with the challenge and then formulate solutions that create the biggest impact. At the onset of the pandemic, our staff immediately reached out to our grant partners to learn the specific effects COVID-19 had on their agencies and the pandemic's rippling effects on the wider community.

We made three important funding decisions after synthesizing the responses.

First, we prioritized contributing to community response funds. In Western New York, we contributed to the WNY COVID-19 Community Response Fund, which is responsible for \$13.1 million in grants across eight counties in support of more than 400 organizations. In Eastern Massachusetts, we worked with the Essex County Community Foundation to support Eastern Massachusetts small businesses and nonprofits in their times of need. Read more about these efforts in the next section of the Annual Highlights.

The second strategic decision we made was to focus on existing grant partners. We lifted all restrictions on any dollars currently in-hand provided by the Tower Foundation for our grant partners and released all 2020 funds as soon as possible. We substantially relaxed reporting requirements. Our program officers reached out to their grant partners about scheduling a time to discuss their grants and their organization's future needs.

The third decision was to offer a COVID-19 Response grant opportunity for organizations advancing the Foundation's mission. We awarded over \$800,000 to 49 organizations, many first-time recipients, for needs created by the pandemic.

"Prioritizing the speed at which our dollars got into the community where they were needed most and responding swiftly and nimbly was the priority," said Tracy Sawicki. "We tried to show gratitude for what our grant partners do every day to better the communities that the Tower Foundation cares so much about. The nimble, swift response enabled our grant partners to do what they do best—make the communities they love better with their hard work."

CASE STUDY

CAPE COD'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INNOVATORS

Adolescents in addiction recovery face an uphill climb under the best of circumstances. Cape Cod's Behavioral Health Innovators (BHI) has worked hard to provide the Cape's teens in recovery with counseling, sober peers, and safe activities. Practically overnight, COVID-19 cut off the vital supports these teens need.

BHI and its counselors swiftly made the switch to virtual meetings both for these teens and for parent support groups. A Tower Foundation COVID-19 Response grant has allowed BHI to invest further in one of its licensed mental health counselors, allowing her to pursue additional licensure as a drug and alcohol counselor.

At a recent listening session, BHI learned that teens are most concerned about their friends with mental health challenges and how the stigma associated with substance use and mental illness weigh on youth preventing them from asking for help. With a dual-licensed counselor, BHI will be better prepared to serve Cape Cod's most vulnerable youth.





RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES THROUGH REGIONAL COVID-19 FUNDS

At the beginning of the pandemic, staff and Trustees of the Tower Foundation asked how we could support our communities and the organizations that provide critical services to young people living with a learning disability, intellectual disability, mental health issue, or substance use disorder, as well as their families.

Given the speed with which COVID-19 spread across the globe and the public health restrictions put into effect seemingly overnight, we had to act nimbly, strategically, and collaboratively with our grant partners, co-funders, and other partners.

The start of the pandemic coincided with our grant cycle, giving us an opportunity to assess how best to use our 2020–2021 funds to support the organizations working so hard to help the young people we aim to serve and their surrounding communities.

After countless calls and virtual meetings among staff, Trustees, grant partners, and other funders, we made the strategic decision to cancel our regular grant cycles for 2020 to provide direct financial support to pooled community response funds. We realized the importance of supporting not only the organizations and issue areas we typically focus on, but also the needs of the broader

community during this once-in-a-lifetime event. We've since made the same decision for the first half of 2021.

"The Tower Foundation's generous support to our Emergency Relief Fund came just weeks after it was created in late March 2020. Their confidence in our Community Foundation came from a long-standing relationship between our Foundations over many years, and we are most grateful for their support," said Margareta Andrews, executive director of the Community Foundation for Nantucket.

"The Foundation knew that we would efficiently and effectively distribute their grant dollars to the Nantucket community during the COVID-19 emergency. The Island is fortunate to have their ongoing support, and the Community Foundation for Nantucket is honored to partner with them."

We contributed to the following community response funds:

Western New York: The WNY COVID-19 Community Response Fund is a collaborative effort among several regional funders to pool resources and distribute them to best meet critical needs across Western New York's eight counties.

Eastern Massachusetts: The Essex County Community Foundation, Martha's Vineyard Community Foundation, and Community Foundation for Nantucket have created similar funds to meet those communities' needs. Likewise, The Cape Cod Foundation is hard at work with other regional funders to build its response.



Image courtesy of FFWNY

CASE STUDY

FANTASTIC FRIENDS OF WNY

Fantastic Friends of WNY is a volunteer-driven social center in Depew, NY that creates opportunities for individuals with disabilities to build authentic relationships, social and life skills, and a support network for life. Fantastic Friends offers innovative programming, safe spaces with one-on-one support, and opportunities for parents to network and re-energize.

In response to the pandemic, Fantastic Friends reached out to families to find out what they needed. Families told them that fun and engaging programming, now moved online, was more important than ever. They also voiced a need

for personal hygiene products, self-care supplies, and over-the-counter medications. Fantastic Friends responded with free, socially-distanced pick-up events for these items. A Tower Foundation grant in mid-2020 helped support these services.

With the return of in-person programming, families felt that Fantastic Friends hadn't missed a beat. In fact, they expanded their services to include STEM classes, and cooking and baking workshops. The organization is now collaborating with another agency on a program for individuals with disabilities interested in culinary careers.

Our contributions to these funds in 2020 were unrestricted. We took this approach because we knew the people working on the ground to address the highest priorities of the community during the pandemic had a better understanding of where to direct resources to have the biggest impact. Simply put, it was not the time to insist on controlling how our dollars were used.

“‘Count us in.’ That has been the response of the Tower Foundation since we first convened the funder community on March 13, 2020,”

said Clotilde Perez-Bode Dedecker, president and CEO of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. “In addition to contributing \$550,000 dollars to the WNY COVID-19 Community Response Fund, the Tower Foundation team rolled up its sleeves to help every step of the way, from producing a survey for the nonprofit sector and rapidly setting up a system to issue a grant application, to producing award letters to more than 300 nonprofit organizations on the front lines of our community response and convening a collaborative effort to address digital equity and inclusion. The impact of the Tower Foundation’s time, talent, and treasure will be felt for years to come.”

We also understood that our staff could play a larger, more active role in partnering with community support funds without dictating how our dollars were spent.

“The support that we received from the Tower Foundation was instrumental in enabling us to quickly and adeptly raise and deploy resources into the Cape Cod community to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents,”

said Kristin O’Malley, president and CEO of The Cape Cod Foundation. “In addition to funding our Strategic Emergency Response Fund, the Tower Foundation staff assisted with outreach to local organizations, adding much needed capacity to our small team, allowing us to identify needs and deploy funding faster than we could have on our own. Our long-standing relationship catalyzed our ability to work together to expand impact during this challenging time.”

Our staff lent their expertise by serving on advisory committees, reviewing submitted grant applications, conducting landscape scans to understand how other communities were operationalizing their funds and distributing their resources, and reaching out directly to nonprofits in the community to get a picture of the issues and challenges they were dealing with to inform the funds’ decisions.

“Like always, the Tower Foundation not only understands the word partnership, they live it. Leading with financial support of our COVID Response Fund was never in doubt. But when the staff called and said, ‘we are here for you, whatever you need,’ I was astounded when she said ‘yes’ to sharing her program staff to help us make hundreds of calls across the county,” said Beth Francis, president and CEO of the Essex County Community Foundation. “Thanks to their staff joining our efforts, we were able to quickly determine the evolving needs and where investments could have deep and rapid impact. That’s partnership during crisis.”



HOW OUR GRANT PARTNERS SEE US

FINDINGS FROM THE CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE PHILANTHROPY'S GRANTEE PERCEPTION REPORT

Listening is how we learn from our grant partners. Not only is this essential to informing how we select and operationalize grants, but it builds a real sense of trust that is fundamental in successful partnerships. Part of this involves asking for and receiving feedback on what we can do to improve as a funder and partner.

With this in mind, we commissioned the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) to conduct a Grantee Perception Report in late 2019 to solicit honest input from the people who know us best. Grant partners were promised confidentiality and asked to share their thoughts on what it's like to work with us. In 2020, we got the results.

First, the good news. Overall, our grant partners have an exceptionally positive view of the Foundation compared to grantees of other funders that CEP has surveyed in the past. We received high marks for three important relationship measures: 1) responsiveness of our staff, 2) openness to new ideas about strategy, and 3) the extent to which our grant partners feel like they are treated fairly. In fact, our ratings on these measures have set new benchmarks for the highest possible ratings that CEP awards funders.

Our grant partners recognize our long-term commitment to our focus areas, equity and inclusion, risk-taking, and innovation. They also rate us highly when it comes to understanding the communities we serve. Our grant partners give us higher-than-typical ratings for awareness of the challenges they face and our ability to understand their strategy and goals.

Grant Partner comments illustrate our strengths as both a funder and partner:

"I have never been so impressed by a foundation's processes, interactions, and communications as I have with Tower. They are truly pioneering in their approach to philanthropy and support of nonprofits to embark on new initiatives. They are able to maintain high expectations yet remain flexible when needed."

"They clearly seek to truly understand projects and progress without the collection of that information becoming burdensome on the nonprofit. They are collaborative and supportive when a challenge is encountered in the program development process."

"Our relationship with the Foundation is invaluable to the children and families we serve. All programs and services directly benefit from the financial stability provided by long-term grant funding. The funding partnership also allowed a key new position to be established that has enhanced the organization's ability to provide social-emotional learning opportunities."

“The Tower Foundation is the single most important factor in the success of our organization’s largest and most significant program in our history.”

It would be easy to hang our hat on the positive comments and continue work as usual. But our staff listened to all feedback and used it as an opportunity to become better partners.

We learned that we give far less general operating support than our grant partners’ other funders. This is a priority for our grant partners, which only increased as COVID-19 stretched their resources to a near-breaking point.

With this feedback and the new needs that the pandemic created, we gave our grant partners the option to convert programmatic dollars to general operating funds and waived the usual grant reporting requirements.

We considered unrestricted grants before the pandemic struck. In the fall of 2020, we launched a general operating pilot grant program. Seven partners were selected to receive general operating grants of \$70,000 (\$35,000/year for two years).

The pandemic amplified the need for flexible funding and our recent Grantee Perception Report indicated we were lagging in this practice compared to other foundations.

We want to keep the administrative burden to a minimum with this program, so instead of progress reports and other paperwork that typically define the grantmaking space, we’ll establish a series of structured conversations between our staff and our grant partners. These discussions will examine the conditions that help or hinder community change, look at organizational-level performance measures, consider new partners, and assess effectiveness of existing strategies.

We are very eager to learn from our grant partners and deepen our relationship through this exchange.

While we were thrilled to see the feedback, the most important thing to us is being the best partner possible. Right now, that means providing the resources to help them not only ride out the pandemic, but to thrive and improve the lives of the people living in their communities.

CASE STUDY

THE NAN PROJECT

The NAN Project promotes mental health awareness and suicide prevention programs for young people across Essex County, Massachusetts. Using a peer-to-peer model, young adults who have experienced mental health challenges connect with youth to normalize conversations about mental health and educate them on available supports. COVID-19 created a significant increase in mental health concerns affecting youth and their families due to the imposed isolation, anxiety, and trauma of loss. In response to the need for increased mental health support during the pandemic, The NAN Project quickly pivoted their supports for young people to virtual formats and assembled a range of online supports for educators and caregivers as well.

In 2020, the Tower Foundation released grant restrictions to give The NAN Project greater flexibility with their pandemic response and supported the organization’s continued evolution over the past year. The shift to virtual programming helped The NAN Project reach a broader audience.

COVID-19 SURVEYS OF FAMILIES

GIVING VOICE TO THE NEEDS OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN LIVING WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY OR LEARNING DISABILITY

The Tower Foundation is committed to supporting and collaborating with nonprofit organizations and community partners that help young people affected by intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health issues, and substance use disorders.

Support is a holistic word—using grants to make a positive impact in our community is a large part of how we can make change and it's an essential component of the whole body of work we're proud of every day. However, our vision of support is to be more than just a funder. Integral components of our mission include helping organizations build their capacity to help more people, creating connections between collaborators and resources, and leveraging assets with other funders.

The goal is to make the greatest possible impact on young people striving to achieve their own definition of success. One of the most substantive ways to do that is to fully understand the barriers to that definition of success. At no time in previous memory have these barriers been more apparent than during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Families of children with intellectual disabilities and learning disabilities face unique challenges, which were exacerbated by the pandemic and the isolation brought about by public health measures put in place to protect communities. The Tower Foundation's mission made it imperative that we understand these challenges to inform grantmaking decisions and support these families effectively.

In early 2020, we worked with Wilder Research, a service of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, to administer surveys to understand the availability and satisfaction of services for young people living with an intellectual or learning disability. The timing allowed us to understand what was going on before the pandemic and with a second set of surveys conducted during the fall of 2020, we saw how services were disrupted by COVID-19.

"The focus was to understand the unique experiences of these young people and families during the pandemic, and how those experiences compare to data from this same sub-population before the pandemic," said Kristin Dillon, research manager at the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Four key themes emerged:

1. The pandemic created more barriers to education and socialization.
2. Community supports during the pandemic depended on where families live.
3. Opportunities for employment became more difficult for young people living with a disability.
4. Despite limited opportunities and services, parents responded positively about how their communities treat young people living with disabilities.

While the survey data will continue to inform our grantmaking, they play an important role in and of themselves. Before we put these surveys into the field, similar data simply didn't exist. No one had formally asked these families about their experiences, the challenges they face, and how their communities meet their needs.

Through the survey process, we also saw an opportunity to give families a voice.

"After the pandemic is over, this information will provide guidance for services and supports that can be maintained during the transition back to more traditional approaches to education and community-based services, as well as how to respond to public health emergencies in the future while maintaining necessary supports," said Dillon.

We plan to use these data to work with our grant partners and other partners to continue to bolster community supports, innovate in education, and knock down barriers to children's success.

CASE STUDY

ERIE COUNTY ANTI-STIGMA COALITION

The Erie County Anti-Stigma Coalition (ECASC) was formed in 2016 to stop the stigma surrounding mental health. When COVID-19 hit, there was a significant uptick in depression and other mental health conditions that are further affected by social isolation, so the Coalition had to get creative to disseminate its message. In response, the ECASC shifted to virtual offerings.

The ECASC placed an emphasis on Facebook engagement. Facebook Live sessions were held on topics ranging from coping with the emotional roller coaster to handling stresses related to going back to work to breaking down barriers to ask for help. These videos were viewed an average of 20,000 times.

The Tower Foundation funds helped leverage support for the awareness campaign and a recent general operating grant will allow the ECASC to continue to their work to change public perceptions about mental health.



Image courtesy of MVCS

CASE STUDY

MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMUNITY SERVICES

Martha's Vineyard Community Services (MVCS) has long struggled to maintain staffing levels in its early childhood programs, due to the high cost of living on Martha's Vineyard. Disruptions from COVID-19 heightened the staff turnover problem. With staffing attrition exceeding 50 percent in its early childhood division, MVCS found that it had to scale back significantly the services it could offer to a community in great need.

In response, MVCS launched the Early Childhood Pathway Program. This three-year initiative offers salary augmentation and professional development bonuses paid out at six-month intervals across the three-year program. The program helps to recruit, professionalize, and retain a long-term early childhood workforce. The program is fully funded through 2023 thanks in part to a general operating grant from the Tower Foundation.

Just a few months in, Pathway has helped recruit three new early childhood educators, with two more in the pipeline, while sustaining a staff turnover rate at zero percent.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

A CONTINUOUS JOURNEY OF SELF-REFLECTION AND IMPROVEMENT

The year 2020 taught us many lessons. Through adversity, we tried to grow as one community, one country, and one world by discussing shared experiences and comparing and understanding different backgrounds.

Even before 2020, we prioritized diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as cornerstones of how to build a philanthropy plan, but also to look inward and ask ourselves difficult questions. We incorporated elements of DEI into every part of our philanthropic approach guided by the work of Bryan Stevenson. Our staff strives to bring these values into our workplace and our philanthropy in four ways: 1) getting proximate with the people and organizations we support, 2) getting uncomfortable and allowing ourselves the space for direct conversations, 3) changing the narratives that sustain unjust practices and policies, and 4) staying hopeful about the journey toward a world free of all 'isms'.

These goals led to a first for the Foundation in 2019—reviewing grants with an Advisory Team comprised of young adults with intellectual disabilities—which was an enormous step for inclusion and our mission. The Advisory Team's feedback is fundamental to our journey and commitment to authentic inclusion.

The staff completed and discussed implicit bias tests developed by Harvard University researchers. These discussions, while uncomfortable at times, allowed us to grow together, consider our different life experiences, and bring them to our work. Committing to equitable, inclusive conversations at the staff level was an important step to take to "live the inclusion" we value. Beyond

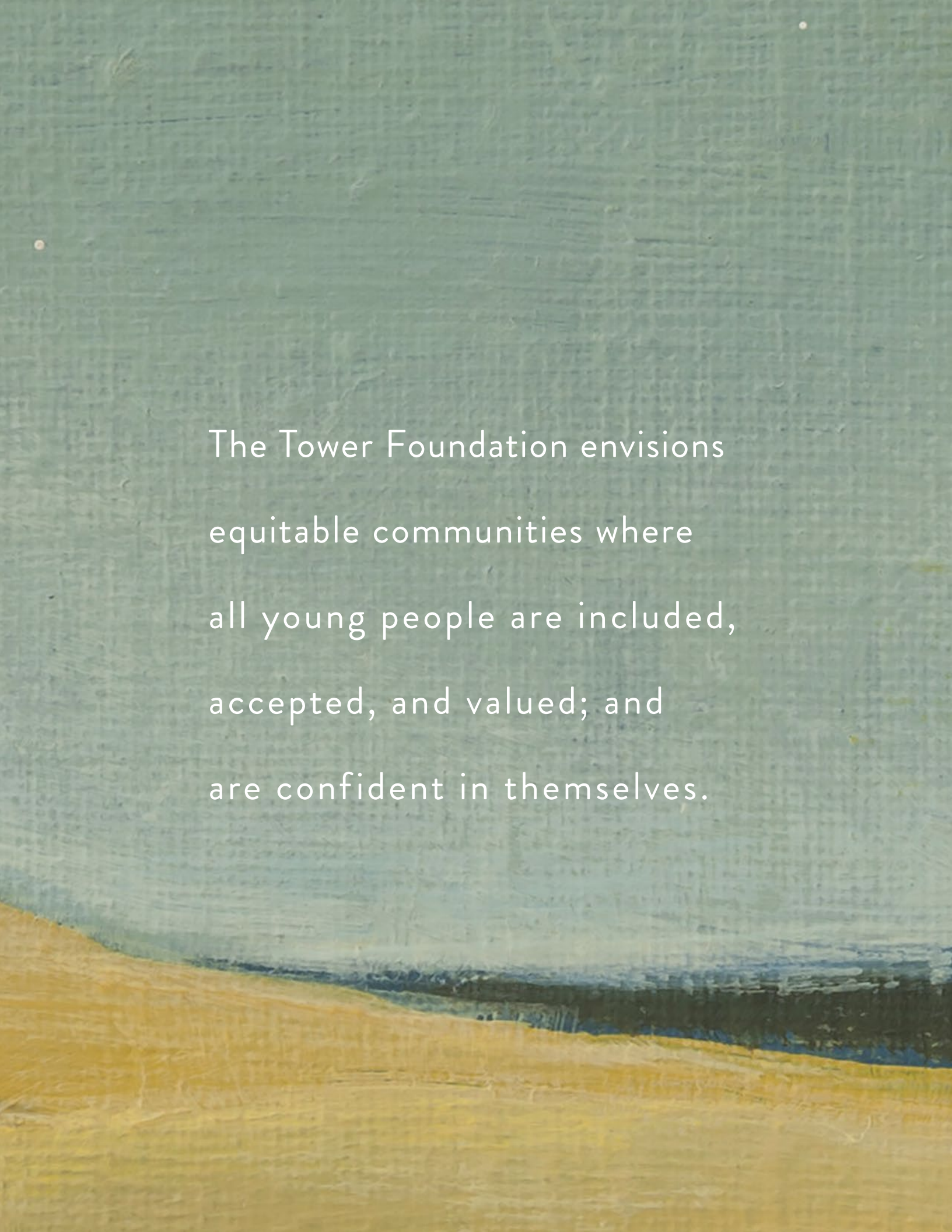
the personal reflection, the staff prepared a rationale for why this work is important, as we began to expand the DEI discussion to include our Trustees.

We prioritize listening in our DEI journey. Listening is a strength of our staff, who see it as an essential component of being a good partner to our grantees. In the Grantee Perception Report that we sent to grant partners, we asked questions related to DEI and acted on some initial feedback. Several grant partners requested support for their organizations' DEI efforts and looked to us to connect them with others on a similar journey.

We were eager to pilot a learning cohort to connect DEI innovations with grant partners and a space for peer reflection. We brought six agencies from across our communities to attend the virtual Race Matters conference with our staff. Our staff joined this effort not as facilitators, but as peers in the learning journey. Our staff has worked diligently, building trusting relationships with grant and community partners over the years, and has made a tremendous difference in how all of us come together to learn and solve problems. Tower Foundation convenings, including this one, have led to a stronger sense of community and the ability to work closer together.

Many of these values have long been at the core of the Tower Foundation's vision: "The Tower Foundation envisions equitable communities where all young people are included, accepted, and valued; and are confident in themselves."

One of our four organizational values specifically enumerates the need for diverse voices. DEI are pillars of our organization and are inseparable from how we operate every day. This is not a temporary initiative or quick change at the Foundation. It's a pillar integral to every facet of our philanthropy and community.



The Tower Foundation envisions
equitable communities where
all young people are included,
accepted, and valued; and
are confident in themselves.

GRANTS AWARDED

As grantmaker, partner, and advocate, the Tower Foundation strengthens organizations and works to change systems to improve the lives of young people with learning disabilities, mental illness, substance use disorders, and intellectual disabilities.

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25	TOWER COVID RESPONSE FUNDS

STRENGTHENING PARTNER CAPACITY

MASSACHUSETTS

Behavioral Health Innovators, Inc.	\$70,000
<i>General Operating Funds — 2021–2022 Pilot</i>	
Cape Cod Collaborative	\$16,000
<i>Modern Teacher Support</i>	
Child & Family Services, Inc.	\$35,000
<i>Telehealth</i>	
Essex County Community Foundation	\$150,000
<i>Institute for Trustees, BOARDConnect, Impact Essex County Data Website, Funders Summits</i>	
Express Yourself, Inc.	\$24,000
<i>Bridging the Therapeutic Gap</i>	
Express Yourself, Inc.	\$70,000
<i>General Operating Funds — 2021–2022 Pilot</i>	
Family Continuity, Inc.	\$40,000
<i>FC IT Sustainability Plan</i>	
Fidelity House Inc.	\$26,000
<i>Strategic Planning 2020</i>	
Institute for Nonprofit Practice	\$5,000
<i>Leadership Learning Series</i>	
Martha's Vineyard Community Service	\$70,000
<i>General Operating Funds — 2021–2022 Pilot</i>	
Martha's Vineyard Donors Collaborative	\$30,000
<i>Supporting Nonprofits on the Vineyard</i>	
Martha's Vineyard Donors Collaborative	\$15,000
<i>Institute for Nonprofit Practice</i>	
Philanthropy Massachusetts	\$15,000
<i>GMA Funder Community 2020 Opioid Response Fund</i>	
The Children's Hospital Corporation	\$60,000
<i>Boston Early Literacy Screener Phase III</i>	
Tri-Town Council	\$70,000
<i>General Operating Funds — 2021–2022 Pilot</i>	
You're With Us!, Inc.	\$38,000
<i>Building Staff Capacity</i>	
Barnstable, Dukes, Essex & Nantucket Counties	\$56,957
<i>Capacity Building Initiatives</i>	

NEW YORK

Amherst Central School District	\$46,000
<i>Amherst Family Support Center</i>	
Aspire of Western New York, Inc.	\$95,000
<i>Aspire Time, Attendance, and Scheduling Transformation</i>	
Care Management Coalition of Western New York, Inc.	\$425,000
<i>Shared Space Project</i>	
Catchafire Foundation	\$250,000
<i>Catchafire Continuation</i>	
CCNY, Inc.	\$77,396
<i>Get READY</i>	
CCNY, Inc.	\$20,000
<i>PEDALS 2020 Award</i>	
Mental Health Advocates of WNY (formerly Mental Health Association of Erie County)	\$70,000
<i>Erie County Anti-Stigma Coalition</i>	
<i>General Operating Funds — 2021–2022 Pilot</i>	
Native American Community Services, Inc.	\$70,000
<i>General Operating Funds — 2021–2022 Pilot</i>	
Parent Network of Western New York, Inc.	\$70,000
<i>General Operating Funds — 2021–2022 Pilot</i>	
Sensational Fun, Inc.	\$4,000
<i>Therapeutic Play</i>	
UB Family Medicine	\$85,000
<i>Addiction Medicine Fellowship</i>	
United Way Services Corp.	\$50,000
<i>WNY Nonprofit Support Group — Plan Implementation</i>	
Villa Maria College	\$14,000
<i>Expanding the Achieve Program</i>	
Erie and Niagara Counties	\$20,400
<i>Capacity Building Initiatives</i>	

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

MASSACHUSETTS

Cape Cod Center for Developmental Disabilities \$40,000
General operating award
in lieu of programs and services grant

Health Law Advocates \$675,000
Mental Health Advocacy Program for Kids Years 9–13

Martha's Vineyard Cerebral Palsy Camp, Inc. \$45,000
General operating award
in lieu of programs and services grant

Methuen Public Schools \$24,840
General operating award
in lieu of programs and services grant

NEW YORK

Community Services for the Developmentally Disabled \$75,000
Co-Creating Well-Being Phase 3: Solutions for Where I Flourish Today & Tomorrow

Gay & Lesbian Youth Services of Western New York, Inc. \$35,000
General operating award
in lieu of programs and services grant

Homespace Corp. \$60,000
General operating award
in lieu of programs and services grant

Institute for Autism Research at Canisius College \$45,000
General operating award
in lieu of programs and services grant

Native American Community Services, Inc. \$26,667
General operating award
in lieu of programs and services grant

Rock Autism, Inc. \$40,000
General operating award
in lieu of programs and services grant

COMMUNITY CHANGE

MASSACHUSETTS

Community Catalyst \$52,000
Expanding and Sustaining Youth SBIRT

Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children \$75,000
Continuation Request: Behavioral Health Urgent Care Model for Children with ASD/IDD

NEW YORK

Buffalo - Toronto Public Media \$40,000
Disability News Desk

Behavioral and Mental Health Consortium \$125,000
Behavioral and Mental Health Consortium Continuation

Community Network for Engagement, Connection and Transformation \$15,000
ANCHOR

REGIONAL COVID RESPONSE FUNDS

MASSACHUSETTS

Community Foundation for Nantucket	\$25,000
<i>COVID-19 Community Response Fund</i>	
Essex County Community Foundation	\$300,000
<i>COVID-19 Community Response Fund</i>	
Permanent Endowment for Martha's Vineyard	\$25,000
<i>COVID-19 Community Response Fund</i>	
The Cape Cod Foundation	\$100,000
<i>COVID-19 Community Response Fund</i>	
The Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism Inc.	\$30,000
<i>COVID-19 Community Response Fund</i>	

NEW YORK

Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo	\$450,000
<i>COVID-19 Community Response Fund</i>	

TOWER COVID RESPONSE FUNDS

MASSACHUSETTS

Behavioral Health Innovators, Inc.	\$15,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Brookline Community Mental Health Center, Inc.	\$25,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Cape Cod Challenger Club	\$3,500
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Cotuit Center for the Arts	\$5,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Eliot Community Human Services	\$20,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Express Yourself, Inc.	\$12,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Fairwinds — Nantucket's Counseling Center, Inc.	\$25,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Family Services of Merrimack Valley Inc.	\$15,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Healing Abuse Working for Change	\$25,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Housing Assistance Corporation of Cape Cod, Inc.	\$20,936
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Latham Centers	\$25,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
LEAP for Education, Inc.	\$17,500
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Lynn Shelter Association	\$25,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Massachusetts Advocates for Children	\$23,500
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Melmark, Inc.	\$25,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Merrimack Valley YMCA	\$5,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative	\$20,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	

Raw Art Works, Inc.	\$15,000	Gerard Place Housing Development Fund Company	\$15,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
St. Ann's Home, Inc.	\$25,000	Healthy Community Alliance	\$15,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
The Island Autism Group, Inc.	\$20,000	Heritage Christian Services	\$7,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
The Pettengill House Inc.	\$20,000	KidsPeace National Centers of North America, Inc.	\$10,000
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
The Plummer Home for Boys	\$10,000	Learning Disabilities Association of WNY	\$23,340
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
NEW YORK		Living Opportunities of DePaul, Inc.	\$25,000
Autism Services, Inc.	\$20,000	<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		Mid-Erie Mental Health Services, Inc.	\$40,000
Cazenovia Recovery Systems, Inc.	\$21,000	<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		Most Valuable Parents of Buffalo, New York	\$15,000
Community Missions of Niagara Frontier, Inc.	\$25,000	<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		New Directions Youth and Family Services, Inc.	\$25,000
Community Services for the Developmentally Disabled	\$25,000	<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		NYSARC Inc. Cattaraugus-Niagara Counties Chapter	\$15,000
Danceability, Inc.	\$25,000	<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		Sensational Fun, Inc.	\$6,000
Empower	\$15,000	<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		Suicide Prevention and Crisis Service, Inc.	\$25,000
Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition, Inc.	\$15,000	<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		The Osborne Association, Inc.	\$10,000
Family Help Center Inc.	\$10,925	<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		VOICE-Buffalo	\$34,168
Fantastic Friends of WNY, Inc.	\$25,000	<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>		Young Audiences of Western New York	\$20,000
Gateway-Longview, Inc.	\$25,000	<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>	
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>			
Gay & Lesbian Youth Services of Western New York, Inc.	\$6,544	TOTAL TRUSTEE DISCRETIONARY GRANTS	\$486,500
<i>COVID-19 Response Grant</i>			

THE TOWER FOUNDATION

The Tower Foundation is shepherded by a dedicated, seven-person team and a supportive Board of Trustees. Our work is based in Western New York and Eastern Massachusetts, areas where the Tower family lived and raised their children.

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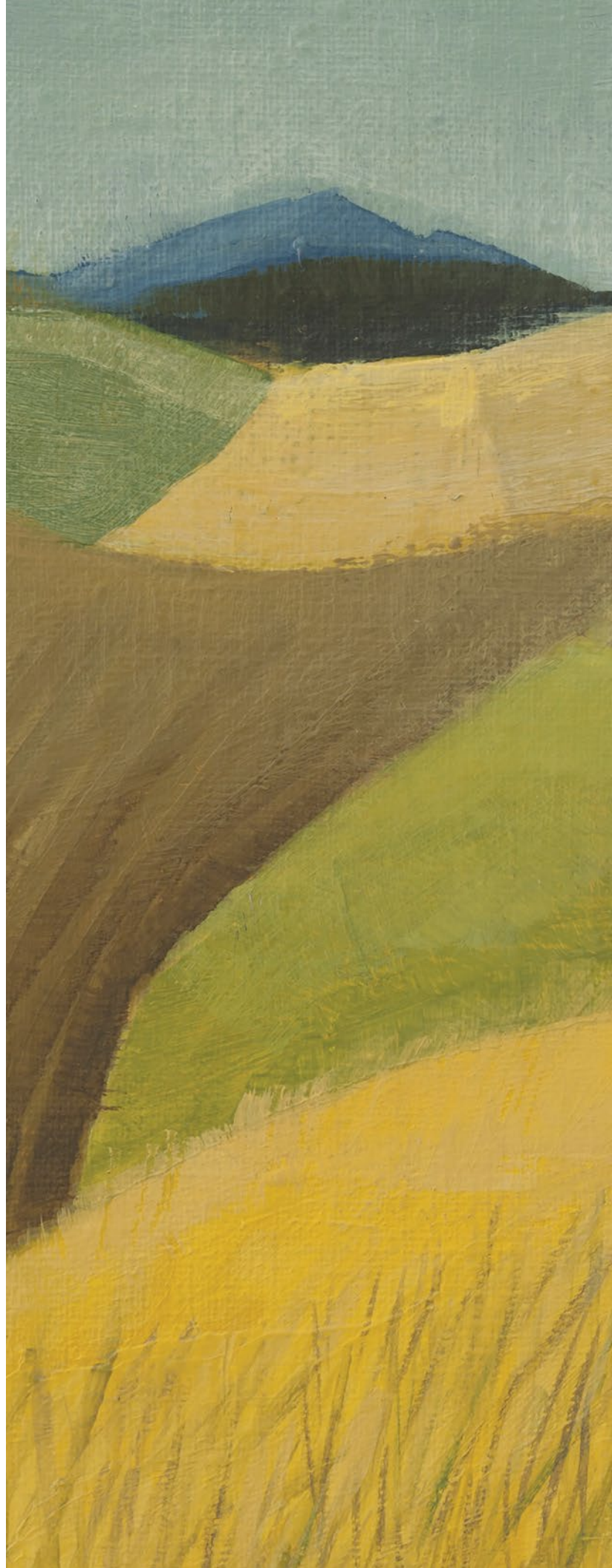
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