

Audio Information NETWORK of Colorado



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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BRINGING PRINT TO LIFE

A note from Audio Information Network of Colorado's Executive Director

I'm Kim Ann Wardlow, and I've had the privilege of being AINC's Executive Director since November 2018. But, I've been with AINC for much longer. In 1999, I started volunteering as a reader and then in 2001 joined the staff as Director of Marketing.

AINC has been broadcasting news and information for over 30 years. Over that time, technology has evolved, and we've evolved with it. We moved first from analog to digital, and then we improved on digital by adding smart devices and on-demand services. We upgraded operations behind the scenes to improve our data collection.

In 2022 and beyond, we are looking forward. The landscape of news media has changed dramatically in recent years, and so has the way that people get their news. At AINC, we are working to change with it to better meet the needs of Coloradans with a print disability. We have formed a Programming Advisory Committee (PAC) to inform our path forward. The majority of these committee members do not read standard print visually, and they lean on their lived experience to offer feedback. The PAC assists us in identifying unmet needs and so that we can better align our programming with those needs.

Of course, our volunteers will continue to read and record thousands of hours of print every year so that our listeners can be informed and connected to their communities.



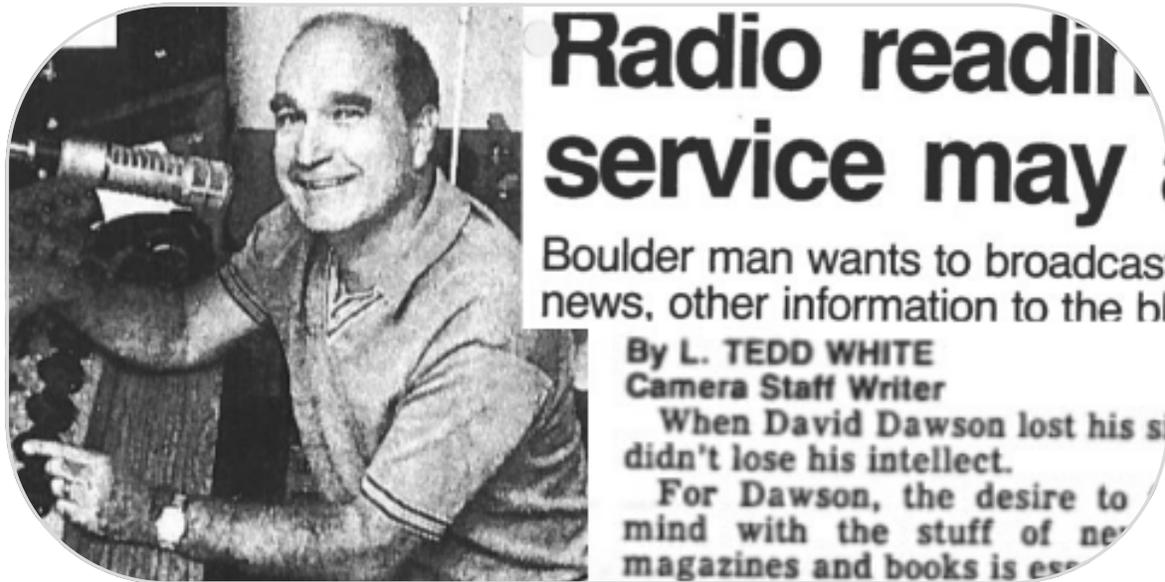
This includes audio editions of almost 100 newspapers as well as magazines, grocery store ads, disaster guides, and others – but moving forward we will also have multiple programs with original content. Currently, we have the Aftersight podcast, a weekly interview show about vision loss. We are also exploring a series on behavioral and mental health issues. We are excited to explore areas of growth guided by the PAC.

In addition to our staff and board members, our listener members, volunteers, and funders are all essential to the AINC team.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Kim Ann Wardlow".

OUR STORY -- SO FAR



OUR BEGINNING

In 1990, David Dawson knew that people like him needed better access to news and information services like local newspapers, grocery store ads, and so many other things that were only available in print. At the time, nobody was offering accessible - audio - editions of print. So, he set to work and established Audio Information Network of Colorado. And now, 30 years later, we are still the "only game in town."

OUR MISSION

AINC's mission is to provide news and information in audio format for the blind, low vision and print disabled community of Colorado. Audio services empower individuals to be self-sufficient, connected to community, and continuously learning.

OUR PURPOSE

Our purpose is to offer connection. We connect people with voices that understand and heal, with tools that offer self sufficiency, with news that informs and educates, with events that empower, and with stories that entertain.

GOALS

1

Broadcast reliable, interesting, and useful content.

We aim to broadcast four signals of continuous, unique content including three regional offerings as well as a Spanish-only signal in order to offer a broad range of compelling, useful content.

2

Grow through increased diversity, range, and programming.

Increase our listenership statewide particularly with younger listeners and those in rural areas by partnering with organizations and healthcare centers that work with people who would benefit from our services.

3

Be accessible.

Remove barriers to services by providing listening equipment, setup, and technical assistance free of charge.

4

Offer autonomy and emotional health.

Improve self reliance and autonomy, and improve mental wellbeing and sense of inclusion.

SUCCESSSES

AINC'S FIRST EVER HIKE FOR PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT



Penn and Evan in Keystone for our Bringing Print to Life hike.

On August 27, 2021, ten blind and visually impaired hikers met on the patio of their hotel in Keystone, Colorado. The following day would be a challenge with a summit at 12,456 feet. The air was charged. Fear and excitement were amplified by a bit of mountain sickness. Some hikers were skilled adventurers, while others faced their first trail. So, between the altitude, the event, and the new experience, the hikers had a lot to be anxious about as they chatted on that balcony. But, nerves calmed as each hiker met their sighted guide, and by the time dinner was over everyone was ready to hit the trail early the next morning.

And so, on August 28, 2021, ten blind and vulnerable hikers were joined by AINC staff on a day of adventure to summit a mountain. Some led their guides, while others needed to take it slow. Regardless of skill or strength, everyone made it to the halfway point. And, though there were difficulties and there were tears, there was also a lot of laughter along the way.

— “ —

“I lost my job last year during Covid. I wanted to work again, but kept getting nowhere. Standing on the summit motivated me not to give up and two weeks afterwards I received a job offer.” – Scott
“I am a stroke survivor and have felt completely alone for a long time. I used to be active, but the stroke took so much from me. The hike changed me and how I look at what I still can do. I am now a volunteer at my stroke rehabilitation center supporting new stroke survivors on their way back.” – Kijuana, Hiker

— ” —

SUCCESSSES



Penn Street (center), host of Aftersight, with guest Lorna Greene (right). Beethoven (left) is a standard poodle and Penn's companion and guide dog.

A YEAR OF FIRSTS AT AINC

AINC's self-produced content

AINC has revitalized our podcast efforts with AINC Original Podcasts! Penn Street, our Development Director, hosts Aftersight. Aftersight is a show by and for people with print disability. It is one of many planned shows.

Programming advisory Committee

At the end of 2021, AINC formed a Program Advisory Committee comprised of AINC listeners. Thanks to their input, we have already begun working to offer a new podcast!

Newsletters

In fall of 2021, AINC restarted our newsletters. So much has been happening that we felt we just had to share!

A focus on funding diversity

We held a fundraising hike, gained sponsors, and broadened our grants funding. We're building a base that can take us another 30 years!

Representation

In 2021, AINC hired two individuals with visual disability in 2021, both are AINC listeners!

CHALLENGES

UNMET NEEDS, NEW AND OLD

Programming

Research has shown us just how prevalent issues of mental health and substance abuse are within the visually disabled and/or older communities we serve. Problems are often undiscussed, undiagnosed, and unsupported.

And, our Program Advisory Committee highlighted how inaccessible some moments can be. Buying a house, filling out forms at the doctor, applying for a job, getting married – and so many other pieces of life – can be inaccessible mazes for people who have difficulties reading.

We are working to offer new programming that responds to these needs.

The shifting sands of tech

Since our inception, AINC has worked to stay on top of advancing technology. Recent years have seen an explosion of devices that can help make life easier for people with print disability. But, this has created a landscape that is often difficult to navigate – which devices are best for our listeners? It's not such an easy question, some are savvy with tech, others are not. Some want functionality, some want simplicity. And, of course, price is always a concern. At AINC, tech is a constant discussion – and pilot projects are common.

We are exploring new technologies that would offer increased autonomy.

Continued need to diversify funding

We have been in continuous operation for over 30 years thanks to grants and donors, but in order to respond to the unmet needs we have found – and the unmet needs we have not – we need to broaden our fundraising efforts. We need to be poised to meet needs as they arise.

We are working to build our sponsors, donors, and events.

CHALLENGES

The right people

As we work to rise to these challenges, we know that our staff is critical. Offering programming that responds to the needs of our listeners, ensuring our funding is diverse and stable, and delivering technology that works for our listeners is work that requires skill and passion. AINC has put a lot of effort into recruiting the right people since the very beginning of our org, and in 2021, some new faces joined our staff, and their input has been vital.

Evan Starnes started as an intern at the Audio Information Network of Colorado, but he's been AINC listener since he was around five. After graduating from Northglenn High school in 2020, Evan attended the independence training program at the Colorado Center for the blind for nine months. He enjoys fixing computers, making music, and going on hikes. In sixth grade, Evan began teaching himself audio production and now edits and works on the audio that AINC listeners hear every day. Currently he attends Front Range Community College and is pursuing a degree in computer information systems.

Penn Street lost most of her eyesight at age nine from Stevens–Johnson Syndrome (SJS) after being bitten by a rattlesnake. Growing up Penn discovered that accessibility was the key to her community, career, and the possibility of living her best life. Being an ADA Coordinator, Outreach Managers, and a member of Development Teams for Colorado's nonprofit organizations has allowed Penn's Accessibility–Passion to become reality. Penn sits on the Ensign Skills Center Board of Directors, is a Member and a Leadership Trainer with Lions Clubs International, and is continuously involved in accessibility advocacy.

Rosana Hinojosa holds a technical degree in Business Administration in Tourism and Hospitality. She has worked as an Administrative Assistant for more than 20 years. She provides administrative support to the Executive Director and office management for the AINC team. Rosana is bilingual (Spanish) *and* bicultural.

And, as we've added new media (like Aftersight) we've realized how much more of a role audio could have in the lives of people with print disability. Producing Aftersight has been a wonderful, collective effort that involved a lot of AINC staff (new and old). Everyone has gone above and beyond the work they were hired to do, and we owe Aftersight's success to them. But we also know that if we want to keep offering new programming, we can't keep asking our existing staff to do more and more! That's why AINC will be working to add a new staff member to manage these efforts – we're hoping to bring additional time and talent to our organization so that we can dive deep into topics like unemployment, mental health, substance abuse, and resource connection.

STRATEGY

We need to continue to do what we do well.

Our purpose is to offer **connection**. We connect people with voices that understand and heal, with tools that offer self sufficiency, with news that informs and educates, with events that empower, and with stories that entertain. We have passionate, dedicated staff who :

- Manage team of about 100 active - and unbelievable - volunteers
- Oversee the broadcast of 100 hours of audio content, every week, made available through our website, through livestreams, through a toll-free, call-in service, and through streaming services like Spotify, Stitcher, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts
- Offer listening devices, setup, and support to our registered listeners, free of charge
- Analyze data and adjust our programming and strategies accordingly

We need be honest about what we need:

The media landscape has shifted dramatically since AINC's inception in 1990. The role of the local paper in people's lives has been a part of that shift. So, while there is still very much a need for accessible, audio editions of local papers (and so many other materials) - we now have the power to use audio to *do* more than ever before for people with print impairment.

In 2021 and into 2022, we have been thinking critically about what this means for our organization. We have been brainstorming and seeking feedback. The desire for honest input and a clear direction inspired us to form our first-ever Program Advisory Committee. This committee is comprised of our listeners, and they who have helped us to identify a path forward through targeted programming.

Finally, we need to reach:

We know that success rarely comes easy - or without a few failures *learning opportunities*. In 2022 and beyond, we are committed to reaching. We have already begun our podcast Aftersight, and we're working on starting another that offers insight and detailed resources for people buying homes or looking for legal council. We're also working to bring a mental health podcast/therapy series to life with the help of a therapist who is visually impaired - and we've already begun our search for hosts. And we have some fun livestream events we'd love to launch, such as an event in 2022 that would pair a professional chef with a visually impaired guest. We're dreaming big. And, we might not succeed everywhere - but we're reaching.

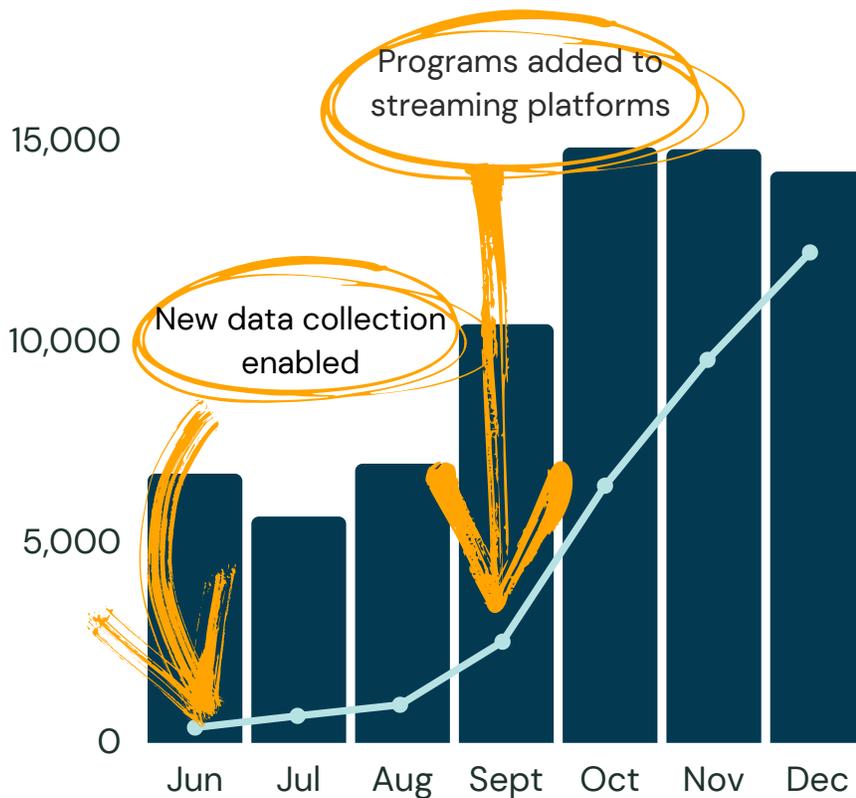
STRATEGY

PROJECTS	DETAILS	OUTCOME
Bringing Print to Life	Our core work: Audio editions of newspapers, magazines, grocery ads, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connects people with news, information, and services, and community events
Aftersight	A podcast by, and for, the print disabled community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broader listener base • Offers solidarity, insight, and inspiration
Program Advisory Committee	A committee of listeners who workshop and advise our programs and program strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment • actionable program ideas
Vision and Mental Health programming	Upcoming podcast series on mental wellbeing and/or substance misuse related to vision impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource for people coping with vision loss • Self care tools
Events: Bringing Print to Life" Empowerment hike and cooking livestream	Hike and fundraiser that enabled 10 visually impaired hikers to summit a peak in Keystone, Colorado	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inspiration and perspiration • New revenue-generating event

BY THE NUMBERS

A GROWING ONLINE LISTENERSHIP

Podcast downloads and data usage growth in 2021



Hosting was migrated, and data collection was fully built around June of 2021. Over the year, there was significant growth in amount of podcast downloads (dark blue bars) – and– in the amount of data being accessed (light blue lines).

1,222
Registered listeners across the state of Colorado

130+
Programs available

23,000+
Downloads in one month

Our goals are to: (1) broadcast reliable, interesting, and useful content, to (2) grow through increased diversity, range, and programming, (3) be accessible, and (4) offer autonomy and emotional health.

- AINC has made our on-demand content easier to find and easier to access
- As a Nonprofit, we are currently evaluating how to make our content more interesting and/or more interesting

OUR LISTENERS



Unedited Listener Feedback

I keep a resources spreadsheet to share with people in the blind community. AINC is one of the resources on the list. AINC is a great resource and a great way for folks to learn about resources and lead independent lives."



It keeps me sane. It keeps me connected to the world



I'll tell you, This is a really good resource for me.



Hi! I am a 72 year old great-grandma, live alone in my mobile home, get along ok, but have diminishing eyesight, and get headaches while watching tv, but I listen to AINC every day, mostly in evening and stay up to date with the world around me, IE; while I live in Federal Heights, my grandchildren live in Greeley and the listening of the Tribune allows me to know what is happening where my granddaughter lives and it really enhances our phone conversations with her, many times I let her know what she might have missed in her own community.

I love and relax to the many readings of books and stories, news, and humor too. I have the echo you provided me, but I listen on channel 6.2 PBS station, Missed it so much last year when the PBS station building moved last year, and it took awhile to get back AINC back on the air. I even called and mailed the PBS people to please turn the switch back on to allow channel 6.2 to be accessed with the French setting on my audio on my TV. I want to thank you all for being very essential workers, and thank all that have contributed to the audio service that I enjoy, depend on and maintain my sanity with..

God bless you all.



OUR LISTENERS

2021 Survey Responses

27% of our listeners tune in a few times a month, 31% tune in a few times a week, and 25% tune in every day. As our listeners endured pandemic confinement in their homes, apartments, and rooms in senior communities, our services were instrumental in reducing social isolation for some.



Age/demographics

Our youngest registered listener is 7 years old, and our oldest listeners are over 100! We serve anyone with any type of print disability - whether that print disability is caused by macular degeneration, Parkinson's, a stroke, or a genetic condition that manifests early in life.

As of March 2022, about 72% of our listeners identify as White, 17% as Latino/Hispanic, 2% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 5% as Black or African American, and the remainder have chosen not to identify or have specified "other." 62% of our listeners identify as female, 36% as male, 2% have chosen not to identify, and one listener has identified as non-binary.

We know that we could help so many more Coloradoans! An estimated 1.9% of Coloradans have some form of visual disability. This represents an estimated 100,000+ individuals in our state!. Our recent efforts to make our programming more accessible (by adding content to Spotify, etc.) is an effort to reach even more of these individuals.

OUR VOLUNTEERS



The Volunteer Efforts

AINC relies on over 100 volunteers to offer audio editions of Colorado print. We're so unbelievably grateful for all the work that they put in! 2019 saw the beginning of changes in our technology with much-needed upgrades. At the time we scheduled the upgrades, we had no idea what was coming in 2020. Having 84 in-house volunteers join the ranks of our fully remote volunteers in a week was not an easy task, yet our volunteers stepped up to the challenge. AINC volunteers faced almost daily changes to how they produced and sent in audio files following the studio closure in March of 2020. Our volunteers adapted to the changes they needed to make and did so graciously. Their efforts as well as those of the AINC staff that enable it are truly works of love. We thank our volunteers from the bottom of our hearts.

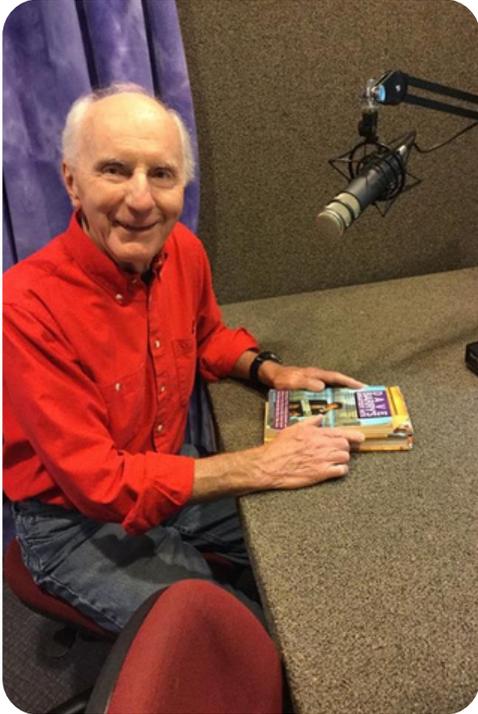
In 2021, AINC's team of around 115 volunteers produced about **7,500 hours of content!** They did this by **donating over 8,000 hours of their time. The total value of their work is over \$218,000!**

We simply could not offer our service without our volunteers!

Thank you to volunteers who have dedicated DECADES of effort!

AINC volunteers show their commitment to our organization, and our mission through the consistent weekly production of quality audio podcasts, and financial support. AINC is fortunate to have volunteers who faithfully have been with our organization for 25-plus years. The staying power of our volunteers is due to the investment of a very special group of individuals, and the relationship we maintain with them. In 2021, two individuals celebrated 25 years of volunteering and three individuals celebrated 20 years as AINC volunteers.

OUR VOLUNTEERS



Jerry Podgorski - 25 years

The "Lighter Side"

Jerry Podgorski has been reading the "Lighter Side" a half-hour program since he started as a volunteer almost 26 years ago.

Back then we were known as the Radio Reading Service of the Rockies. We had a small studio, fewer volunteers, and produced significantly fewer programs.

When Jerry first started reading his program was 'live' meaning you heard it as it was read when it went out over the broadcast signal.

Over the years Jerry has read content from writers such as Irma Bombeck, Dave Barry, and a host of other entertaining, and amusing authors.



Beth Tavino - 25 years

Commitment through change

Beth Tavino and her husband relocated to Boulder from Boston over 40 years ago. Beth was drawn to our organization over 26 years ago because of her love of reading out loud.

After Beth recorded her audition on a reel-to-reel tape, she started to feel like it might be too hard to record weekly on a reel-to-reel recorder. Little did Beth know the changes she would face as a volunteer so many years later as she adapted to reading remotely.

Some of the programs Beth has read over the years were children's stories, the Denver Post, and the Monday edition of the Christian Science Monitor.

Beth currently reads the Monday, and Friday editions of the Christian Science Monitor. Her fan base has commented on her perfect pronunciation of French in her articles .

MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS



Funding is provided through grants from foundations, trusts, and jurisdictions, as well as donations from corporations, service clubs, and **individuals** who want to support those who cannot read print.

State of Colorado

Counties

- Broomfield City & County

Cities

- Arvada
- Commerce City
- Thornton
- Westminster

RMPBS Stations that air AINC include:

- KRMA-TV Channel 6 (Denver)
- KTSC-TV Channel 8 (Colorado Springs/Pueblo)
- KRMJ-TV Channel 18 (Grand Junction)
- KRMU-TV Channel 29 (Durango)

Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)

- Boulder County
- Denver Regional Council of Governments

Service Clubs

- Fort Collins Lions Club
- Lafayette Lions Club
- Loveland Lions Club
- Loveland Downtown Lions Club

Businesses and Corporations

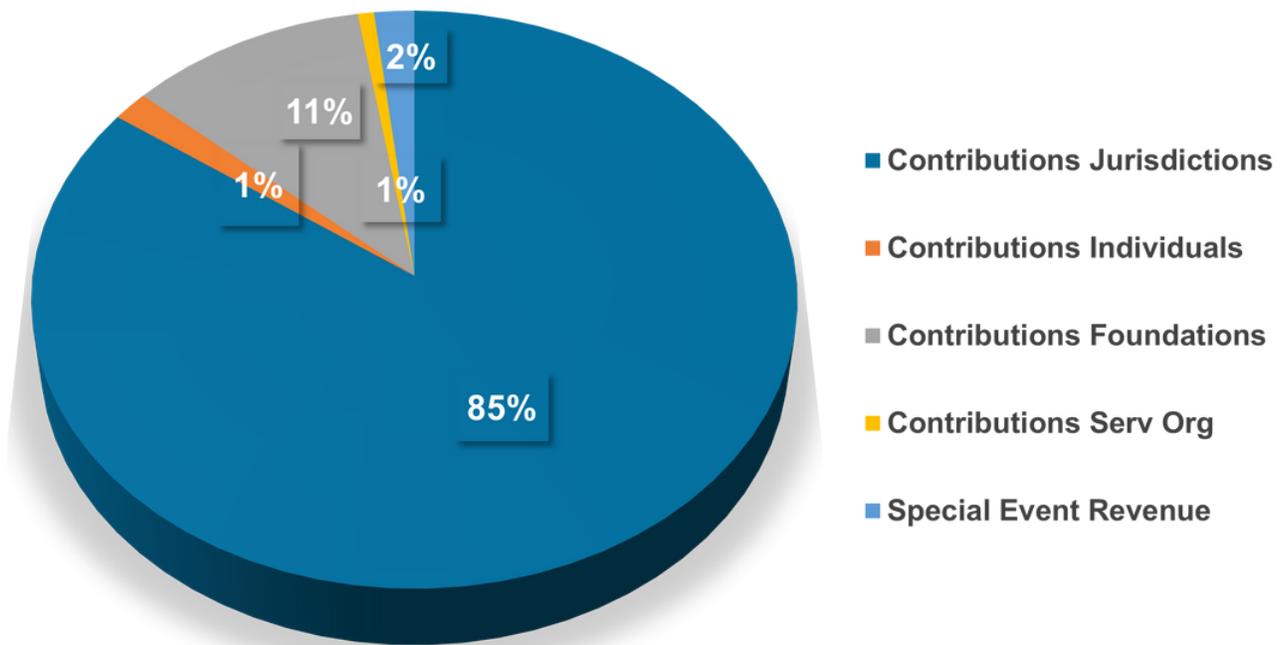
- Newspapers and Magazines that donate subscriptions
- Benevity Matching Gift Program
- KCO, Inc.
- Weissman Family Dental
- Wana Brands
- Trinware
- Orion Reverse Mortgage
- Transition Through Change

Foundations and Trusts

- Erik Weihenmayer Reach Foundation
- AEC Trust
- Anschutz Family Foundation
- Anschutz Foundation
- Broomfield Community Foundation
- Collins Foundation
- Community Foundation of Boulder County
- DAV Charitable Service Trust
- Edmund T. & Eleanor Quick Foundation
- Erikson Fund of the Pikes Peak Community Foundation
- Virginia W. Hill Foundation
- Hynd Trust for the Blind
- Longmont Community Foundation – Live and Give
- Network for Good
- William B. O'Rourke Foundation
- Schlessman Family Foundation
- Joslyn Charitable Trust

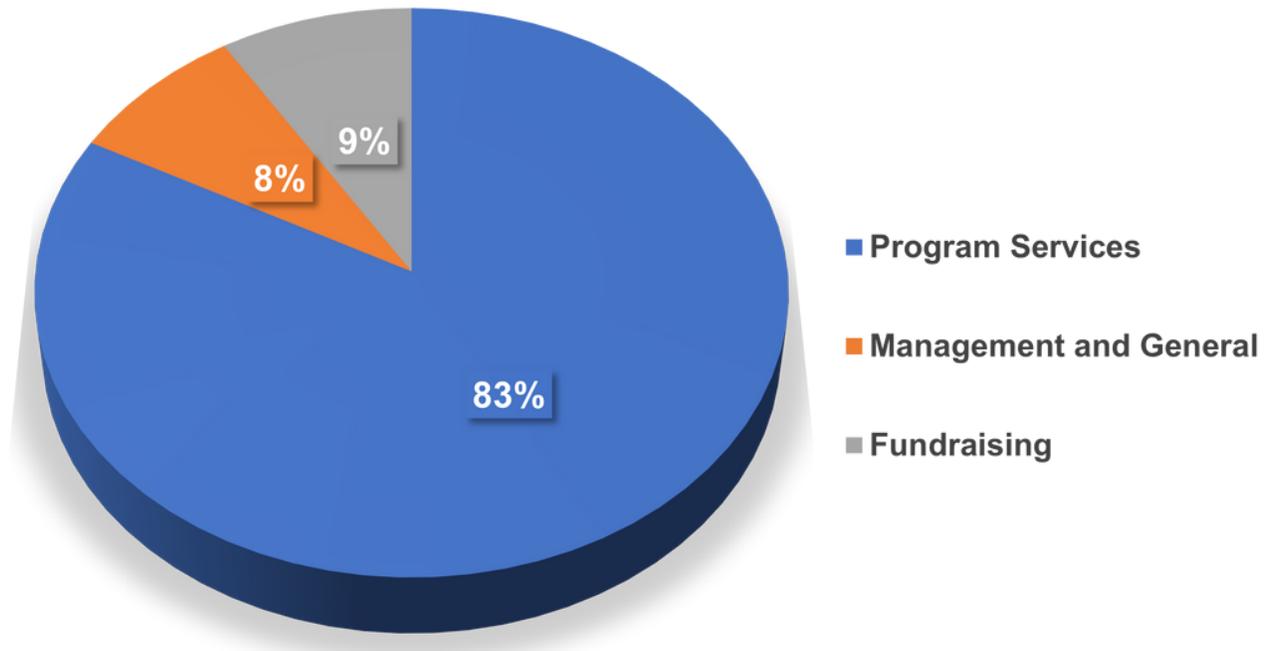
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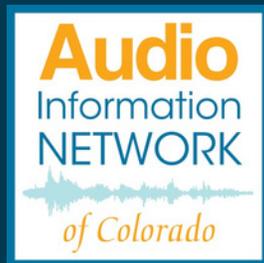
Income



FINANCIALS

Expenses





Bringing Print to Live

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