

arborbrothersnews



Dear Donors, Supporters and Friends,

Sammy once had a boss whose favorite question when connecting with clients was a simple “How’s it going?” And then he’d just *stare* at them. On the surface it’s a lazy query, but his idea was that people would share what topics they thought were important. To him, that was more revealing than the content of their answers, or even the topics *he* thought were important.

So: *how’s it going* over at Arbor Brothers? Great question. So glad you asked.

In 2021, our grantees by and large hit their goals for developing **strong organizational cultures** and met or **exceeded their fundraising targets**. From an outcomes perspective, job training grantees have been going gangbusters, notching their **highest-ever job placement rates** and starting placement salaries. Grantees tied to the K-12 system, however, have posted much more mixed results due to COVID-related school disruptions. Additionally, the **Great Resignation** is very real for many grantees, as the red-hot talent market and remote work options are fueling a *doubling* of historical turnover rates.

Arbor Brothers headed into 2021 with more uncertainty than usual, as we unexpectedly lost our two largest funders at the end of 2020. We’re thrilled to report that we had a terrific year: our extraordinary donors enabled us to raise more than ever before, our team is hitting its stride, and our relationships with portfolio leaders are as productive as ever. Read on for the details...

Warmly,
The AB Team

As always, we endeavor herein to be substantive, candid and brief. We look forward to your feedback.

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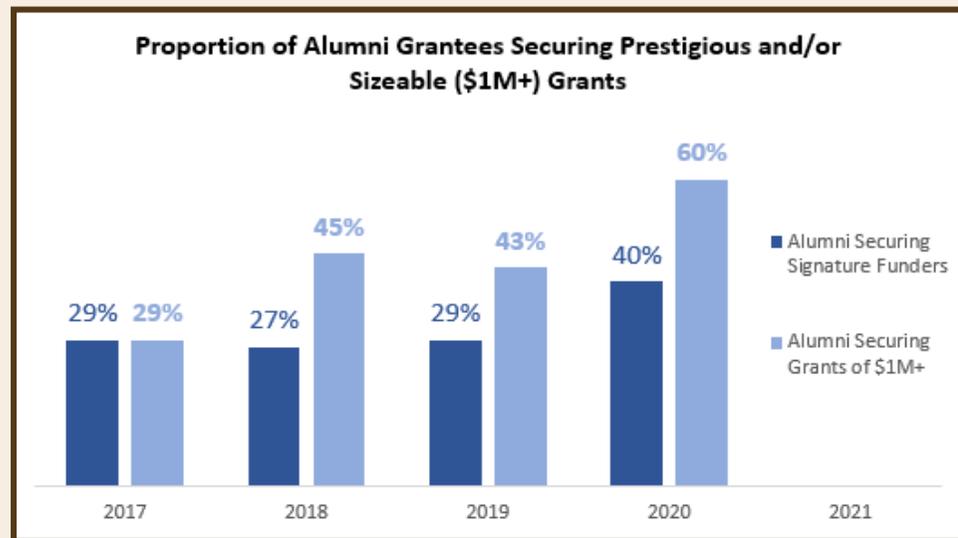
News From Our
Network

2021 in Review: Grantee wins, strong financials & healthy feedback

Grantees: Strong foundations and ready to scale

Last year alone our former grantees secured twelve \$1M+ gifts, and now more than half have attracted support from prestigious “signature” funders such as the Gates Foundation and MacKenzie Scott.

See more key metrics in our [2021 graphical dashboard](#).



	2019A	2020A	2021A
Total revenue	\$2.48M	\$2.57M	\$3.13M
<i>Growth</i>	10%	4%	22%
Budget			
Cash grants	54%	63%	51%
Consulting *	32%	27%	34%
Nonprofit support	86%	90%	85%
Operating costs *	14%	10%	15%
Total expenses	100%	100%	100%

** Includes allocated portion of people costs*

Financials: Our donors continue to step up

With generous support from our phenomenally-reliable donors and new allies, we raised a record \$3.1M last year, positioning us to drive even more impact in 2022.

Feedback: “Keep up the good work ... and here are a few growth areas.”

While our annual anonymous [grantee survey](#) underscored the important role we play in building organizational capacity, we tend to focus on the constructive feedback. Some first-year grantees noted that they wished they had a better perspective on the breadth of our project offerings and how to get the most out of our relationship. We plan to facilitate connections, where feasible, between portfolio “graduates” and new entrants to authentically pass-along this inside dope.

Highlight from the Arboretum: Mastering the Reference Call

Last fall we welcomed ten nonprofit people managers into our peer learning cohort, **The Arboretum**, to problem-solve challenges and learn about core management principles, including how to hire well. We find managers often overlook **reference calls**—a step of the hiring process which, in our experience, can be determinative when undertaken intentionally. Here is some advice we passed along to the cohort; perhaps you will find it useful in your hiring practices, too.

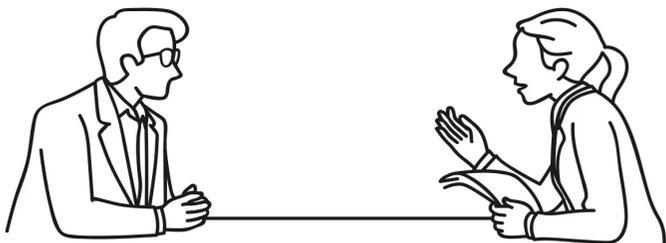
If a candidate gets to the reference call stage, you know you like them and they can do the job, but you don't really *know* them.

Since most candidates provide references who will likely say positive things, managers need to listen carefully to what is *not* said and seek to understand:

Can you trust this candidate's judgment?

What are they like when they're stressed?

What are the candidate's blind spots?



AB's Go-To Reference Call Questions

- On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 5 as average peer and 10 as best you've ever seen), how would you rate this candidate's:
 - EQ, or ability to authentically connect and build trust?
 - Leadership instincts, or knowing what to do when things get challenging?
 - Overall performance in the role?
- If not a 10: What would it have taken for this person to reach a 10?
- What two key pieces of manager-to-manager advice do you have to successfully manage this person?

Check out [AB's Guide to Reference Calls](#) for more tips.

By acknowledging and reflecting upon our shortcomings, we hope to avoid similar oversights in the future. Here are some excerpts from a long list:

1. **Create the incentive.** While we had strong Arboretum attendance overall, we belatedly remembered that middle managers (constituting the Arboretum cohort) often get pulled into unplanned meetings and fire drills. During our next cohort, we will incentivize even stronger engagement by offering mini-grants to organizations who allow their managers to attend and adequately prepare for all sessions. The grant monies would then be used to beef up that organization's professional development budget.
2. **Banter is great; just try to avoid those potholes of tactlessness.** Especially in remote Zoomland, we all recognize the value of those first few minutes of personal interchange before the meeting kicks off. Pets? Travel plans? Someone's weekend? All good. Reminding ourselves to avoid any commentary on folks' appearance (energized or otherwise) and to be careful and consistent with pronouns.
3. **I don't think it's our lighting.** Maybe it's rickets? Some of us may have been a *leeetle* overzealous in our quarantining during this omicron wave. Got to make time for our daily GirlTrek walk for some Vitamin D.



Site Visit: AB Grantee Braven



How is **Braven** helping first-generation students land strong first jobs in Newark?

If you're interested in joining a virtual site visit with Braven this March, let us know!

News From Our Network

- Huge congratulations to the team at our former grantee Pursuit, who secured \$10 million for [Pursuit Bond 2.0](#)! We were so thrilled to be a part of Bond 1.0, and we're proud this vehicle is expanding.
- Yonkers Partners in Education (YPIE) ED Sam Wallis [shares how YPIE is supporting young people's college dreams](#) amidst economic, political and social uncertainty.
- Arbor Brothers is thrilled to welcome [Francisco Tezen](#), President and CEO at [A Better Chance](#), to our Board of Directors!

Contact AB | Learn More:   

Follow-on

