



Polaris Freedom
happens
now.

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



Dear Friends,

Thank you for celebrating Polaris's 20th anniversary with us in 2022. Since our founding, much has evolved in how we understand, respond to, and prevent human trafficking. What hasn't changed is our unwavering commitment to answer the call.

As you'll see in our expanded theory of change, Polaris has more clearly articulated that commitment. We've defined our work under three categories: **Direct Response**, notably through the National Human Trafficking Hotline (Trafficking Hotline) and the forthcoming Resilience Fund; **Research & Intelligence**, leveraging the largest data set on trafficking in North America and our partnerships with leading financial institutions; and **Campaigns & Public Engagement**, driving progress through policy advocacy and public education.

We've also spelled out our approach with three key principles shaping our efforts. First, we are **survivor-centered**, setting new standards with the National Survivor Study (NSS) conducted in full partnership with survivors. Second, we are **technology-enabled**, modernizing the Trafficking Hotline, applying new artificial intelligence tools, and winning a place in the Tech Against Trafficking Accelerator Program for our worker engagement tool, Nonechka. And we are **justice and equity-driven**, using a racial, gender, and economic justice lens across our programs, including advocating for policies that prevent sex and labor trafficking and support survivors.

We're already starting to see the results. Survivors have found help, hope, and healing through the Trafficking Hotline and other resources. But more than that, they have also led groundbreaking work like the NSS, contributing their expertise to change the anti-trafficking field and cross-sector systems.

Meanwhile, thousands have learned what human trafficking really looks like from our online Human Trafficking 101 training, media guide, and communications campaigns. And law enforcement, prosecutors, and policymakers are chipping away at the challenge of holding traffickers accountable, supported by Polaris research, intelligence, and policy recommendations.

Your partnership with Polaris makes all this possible. Together, we are working toward a world without trafficking — a world where every human has the freedom to choose how they live and work.

With gratitude,



Catherine Chen
CEO



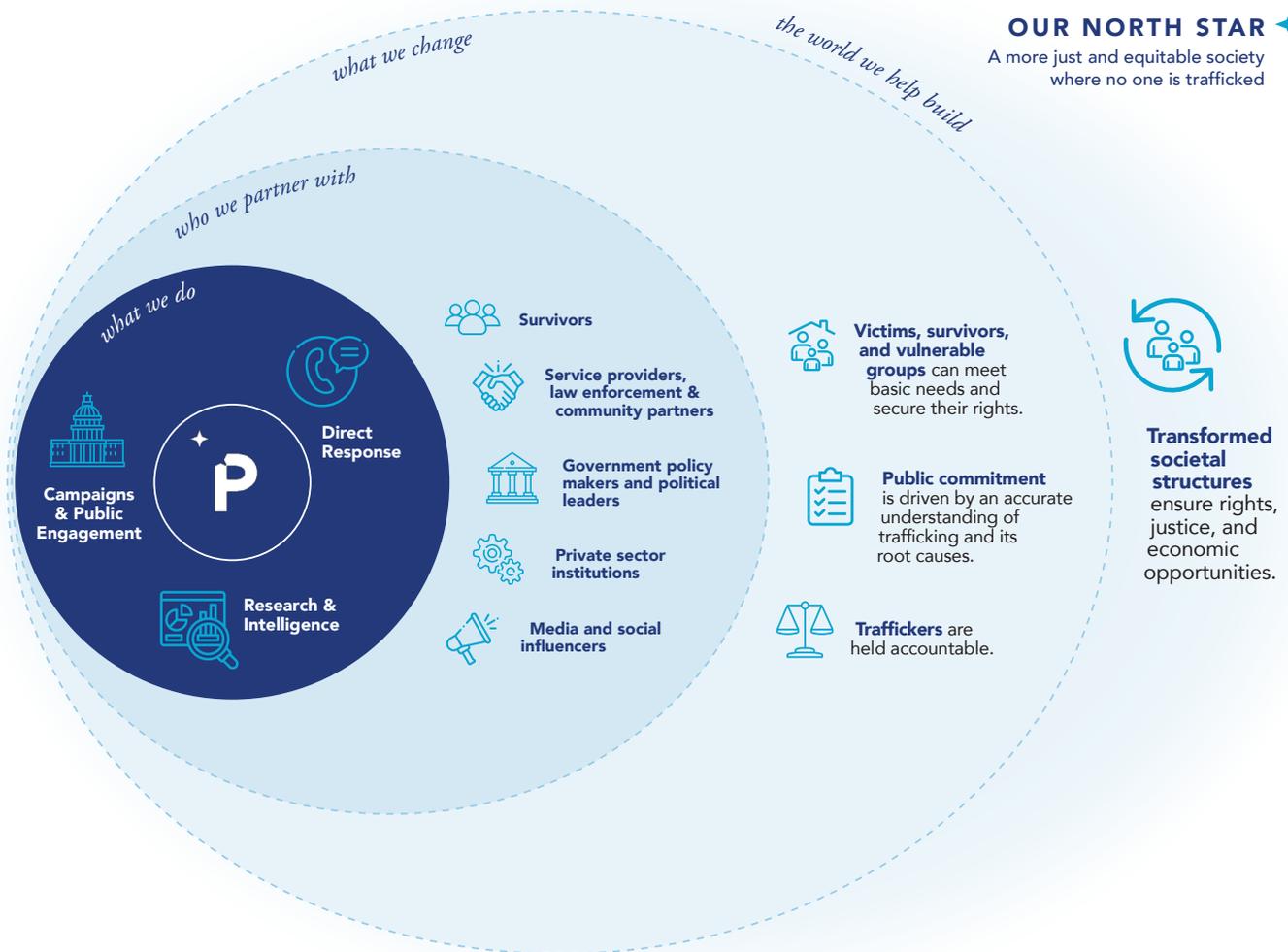
Gregory Moore
Chairman, Board of Directors

✦ Creating a More Just and Equitable Society

A few years ago, we shared an early version of our theory of change — a visual explanation of what Polaris does and how we are changing the systems that enable exploitation. Since then, this theory has evolved and been refined to better explain our work.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

OUR NORTH STAR ✦
A more just and equitable society
where no one is trafficked



Our Context

Human trafficking is a \$150+ billion global industry affecting nearly 28 million people. After supporting victims and survivors for over 20 years, we know that traffickers exploit vulnerabilities like poverty, trauma, racism, sexism, and other issues resulting from broken and biased systems.

But few anti-trafficking efforts target systemic change to prevent trafficking, and those that exist are often siloed. We also know there's a need to frame narratives around root causes of vulnerability and the agency of those affected. And vulnerable groups, victims, and survivors must be included at decision-making tables.

To transform this landscape, Polaris does three main things:



Provides **DIRECT RESPONSE** for victims and survivors via the Trafficking Hotline and other programs, supporting their immediate needs, building trust, and developing a nuanced understanding of their experiences



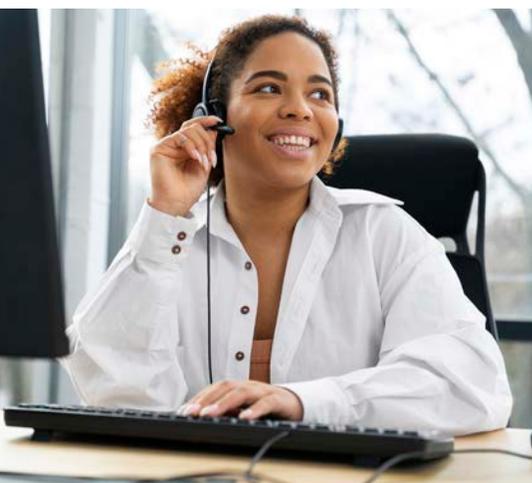
Generates and shares actionable, relevant insights through **RESEARCH & INTELLIGENCE** that drive a smarter response to trafficking across the field and, in partnership with financial institutions, make it harder for traffickers to profit.



Delivers **CAMPAIGNS & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT** to drive transformative, equity-based public policies and just socioeconomic conditions

But we don't create change alone. As a leader in the anti-trafficking movement, Polaris catalyzes stakeholders across the spectrum to achieve collective outcomes. These short- and medium-term outcomes support our long-term goal of **transforming societal structures to ensure rights, justice, and economic opportunities — creating a more just and equitable society where no one is trafficked.**

Read on to see this theory of change in action in 2022!





DIRECT RESPONSE

Trafficking Hotline 2022

EACH MONTH:

Responded to

4,821

substantive contacts



Assisted

504

potential victims or survivors, up from 400 the previous year



Provided over

800

referrals to community-based services



66%
Sex Trafficking

13%
Labor Trafficking

6%
Sex Trafficking and Labor Trafficking

15%
Other/Not-Specified Trafficking

Average monthly statistics are based on data through June 30, 2022; percentages of trafficking types are based on calendar-year data reported to the Office on Trafficking in Persons. The National Human Trafficking Hotline is supported by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$4.5 million annually with 78% percentage funded by ACF/HHS and \$1.3 million and 22% percentage funded by non-government sources. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACF/HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit the ACF website, Administrative and National Policy Requirements: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/administrative-and-national-policy-requirements#chapter-8>.

TRAFFICKING HOTLINE 2.0

In 2022, Polaris began a two-year **Hotline Optimization Project (HOP)**, partially supported by a Digital Innovation grant from the Twilio Impact Fund, to modernize technology, increase workflow efficiencies, improve frontline staff experience, and better serve those who contact us.

First, we partnered with **U.S. Digital Response** and the **Office of the Chief Technology Officer at the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families** to conduct human-centered design analysis and maximize frontline staff's ability to respond to victims, survivors, and those supporting them.

The HOP's first year also produced tangible technology changes:

- ✓ **Dedicated phone lines for service providers and law enforcement** to contact our case response team about ongoing cases
- ✓ **Updated interactive voice response (IVR)** to provide wait times and encourage victims and survivors to stay on the line while redirecting non-urgent calls to alternative ways to reach us
- ✓ Initiated steps toward **consolidating text and chat on Twilio Flex platform** for more consistent user experience



The False Promise of a Fair Wage

In 2015, the Trafficking Hotline received a call alleging labor trafficking by a company that brought agricultural workers into the U.S. on H-2A visas. The information was passed to the appropriate authorities, and in 2022, four perpetrators pled guilty to racketeering, fraud, and other charges, receiving sentences of prison time and restitution for victims — nearly 10 years and over \$175,000 in the case of the company owner.

Court documents paint a picture that is all too common. The company's crimes included:

- Charging visa fees of \$1,000 to \$2,000 and lying about reimbursing workers for the cost
- Making false promises about workers' pay
- Creating fraudulent records to avoid paying workers what they earned
- Subjecting workers to crowded, unsanitary, and degrading living conditions
- Confiscating passports and threatening workers with arrest/deportation
- Lying to federal agencies and investigators

"Human trafficking, including forced labor campaigns that exploit vulnerable workers, is unlawful, immoral, and inhumane," said Kristen Clarke, Assistant Attorney General of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "This defendant abused his power as a business owner to capitalize on the victims' vulnerabilities and immigration status, luring those seeking a better quality of life with false promises of lawful work paying a fair wage."

Polaris is proud to have played a part in launching this investigation, but there is a long way to go to reach our vision of a world where no one is trafficked. Through the Trafficking Hotline and other programs, we are committed to ending exploitation.

HOTLINE HIGHLIGHTS:

15 Years of Answering the Call

- **2007**
Answered first call to the Trafficking Hotline
- **2013**
Added BeFree textline
- **2014**
Launched Global Modern Slavery Directory
Began partnering with corporations for transportation and short-term shelter for victims and survivors
- **2015**
Helped stand up Mexico's national human trafficking hotline with Consejo Ciudadano
- **2017**
Published "The Typology of Modern Slavery," identifying at least 25 types of trafficking in the U.S.
- **2019**
Helped stand up Canada's hotline with The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking and created the three-country North American Safety Net with Mexico's hotline
- **2020**
Pivoted the Trafficking Hotline to remote operations in March and responded throughout the pandemic
Launched the Financial Intelligence Unit, using Trafficking Hotline data to help disrupt trafficking
Responded to a wave of disinformation about child trafficking
- **2022**
Began the Hotline Optimization Project to improve service
Handled 35 times as many monthly contacts via call, text, webchat, email, and online tip form as in the first year



RESEARCH & INTELLIGENCE

Listening to Survivors

In 2022, Polaris completed the first-of-its-kind National Survivor Study (NSS), a groundbreaking project defined by survivor leadership at every step. Not only is it the first study to focus on survivors' futures, but it has also proven that survivor-led research is both possible and preferable for generating deeper insights.

Survivors' input produced key findings about vulnerabilities to trafficking, needed services and supports, and barriers to financial and societal inclusion. Read more about the results at <https://polarisproject.org/national-survivor-study/>.

SURVEY SAYS

The NSS is the largest known survey of survivors in the U.S., with 457 responding in English, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese.



43%
make less than \$25,000 per year



22%
were in the juvenile justice system at some point in time

62%
were arrested/detained at least once

71%
of those arrested have criminal records

83%
experienced poverty as children



89%
of labor trafficking survivors did not have a way to complain without their employer finding out

In Her Own Words

"I can tell you that I am alive today because of Polaris and the text message service you operate for survivors. During many months of silence after my escape, when I could not even manage to even utter a single word to a friend; in times of incredible isolation and when years of poly-victimization resulted in my inability to communicate, Polaris was there for me. Polaris always texted me back. Polaris has always answered my calls. Polaris helped me find the courage to stay alive when I believed that the thing that could relieve me of this pain was death.

"As I read the results of the study, I was so emotionally moved and brought to tears. I've reread the study over and over again; finishing the last page incites a feeling of liberation I have not felt in years. Thank you for shining a light on the magnitude of misconceptions, systemic struggles, and so many issues I blamed myself for. This has helped me in my healing from the stigma, shame, and post-traumatic stress.

"Although I continue to struggle with the consequences of what happened to me and have lost almost everything in my life, this survey and study gave me a much-needed sense of community, albeit a silent one. Thank you for all you have done, for accomplishing such important work, and for helping all of us survivors finally realize that we are not alone."

– **Natalie Parker-Rezek, NSS Contributor**



Following the Money

Polaris's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) partners with financial institutions and law enforcement to disrupt trafficking businesses and make the crime riskier and less profitable for traffickers. Taking this financial crimes approach can be more supportive of victims and survivors, as money laundering, fraud, and tax evasion cases don't always require victim testimony.

To track down potential traffickers, the FIU:

- **Generates** intelligence using Trafficking Hotline reports, negative news checks, social media analysis, and information from other anti-trafficking initiatives to identify suspicious individuals, businesses, and networks;
- **Engages** partners in strengthening processes and systems that flag suspicious activity and support effective, efficient investigations; and
- **Develops** resources on emerging topics and broader trends, such as fact sheets on the use of cryptocurrency and case studies on financial crime prosecutions.

FIU IN 2022

Supported **nine financial institution partners**



Increased **intelligence production by 25%** over last year



Identified **122 businesses and 105 individuals** suspected of trafficking involvement



Informed **financial and law enforcement investigations**, including an FBI investigation on a network of companies laundering money, engaging in sex and labor trafficking, and linked to extremist groups



Evolving Our Data Analysis

Thanks to a grant from the Patrick J. McGovern Foundation, Polaris piloted two new data science-driven tools to analyze Trafficking Hotline case notes more efficiently:

- **Risk Factor Classification Model:** Polaris created a machine-learning model to identify risk factors from Trafficking Hotline data. As a test, we used it to determine that recent migration or relocation and recent financial debt were the most common vulnerabilities across labor exploitation cases. This tool sets the stage for us to pursue predictive insights that could help cross-sector partners — service providers, social media platforms, public agencies, and others — prevent trafficking before it happens.
- **Case Notes Search Tool:** Using natural language processing, we developed a more agile way to search Trafficking Hotline case notes and explore emerging issues in real time. We used this tool to determine the accuracy of social media narratives warning about abduction-based recruitment, especially by white vans. In record time, the team found that only 6% of victims were abducted — the second least referenced form of recruitment — and 0.04% were abducted by a white van.



CAMPAIGNS & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Strengthening Systems Against Sex Trafficking

Polaris has continued to engage survivor leaders and partners in **expanding the safety net** to prevent trafficking among vulnerable groups, growing our city-based coalitions and coalescing themes and learnings that can be applied across geographies and sectors.

We enhanced our safety net efforts with a focus on **criminal justice reform**. As the NSS made clear, many survivors have criminal records due to their trafficking experiences, preventing them from reclaiming full freedom even after exit. To support survivors and prevent re-exploitation, Polaris is advocating for policies that shift accountability from victims and survivors to buyers.

Expanding the Safety Net

- Worked with **six cities**, bringing our total to **nine since launching** the initiative
- Engaged **58 partners** across the country
- Identified **four themes** across cities:
 - Intersection of substance abuse and trafficking
 - School education for young children and youth
 - Youth and young adult housing
 - Communication and collaboration across providers

Reforming Criminal Justice Policies

- Identified **three model policy steps** for cities:
- End arrest of minors for prostitution-related crimes, provide service referrals, and clear criminal records and outstanding warrants
 - Increase enforcement on buyers, with fees supporting survivor services and investigations
 - End arrest of adults for prostitution-related crimes, provide service referrals, and clear criminal records and outstanding warrants



- 1 Boston
- 2 Dallas
- 3 Detroit
- 4 Las Vegas
- 5 Louisville
- 6 Minneapolis
- 7 New Orleans
- 8 Philadelphia
- 9 San Diego



Empowering and Protecting Workers

In 2022, Polaris completed the initial expansion of Nonechka, our mobile phone-based worker engagement platform, from Mexico to the U.S. Nonechka breaks down isolation and connects workers to grassroots groups, resources, and information about their rights. It also gives them a safe way to share feedback about their recruitment and working conditions — and amplifies their voices at the federal level through Polaris’s advocacy.

Beyond Nonechka, Polaris has engaged consular officials, policymakers, and other partners. All of these efforts help empower workers to secure their rights, equip agencies to support them, and ultimately change systems to prevent labor trafficking from happening in the first place.



A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MEXICAN CONSULAR NETWORK



Trained **2,500+** personnel to date across all **50 states**



Helped a trained consulate identify and follow up on a potential trafficking case involving **30+ workers** in Connecticut



Signed **new MOU** to formalize partnership and expand training

A Call to Action

- Released “Labor Trafficking on Specific Temporary Work Visas: A Data Analysis” report, highlighting **15,886 victims of labor trafficking** identified through the Trafficking Hotline from 2018-2020
- Advocated for report **recommendations**, such as creating options for H-2 visa holders to change jobs, strengthening enforcement, reforming recruitment, and increasing transparency
- Shared the report with partners and policymakers, reaching contexts ranging from **media publications** to **Congressional committee hearings**



Translating New Laws into Real Impact

The **Debt Bondage Repair Act** enables survivors to block adverse information related to their trafficking experiences from their credit reports. After this act passed in late 2021, Polaris worked hard to help survivors benefit in 2022. Check out this timeline to see the full picture!

- MARCH 2021** — House Financial Services Committee holds a hearing on human trafficking. Advocate, policy expert, and survivor Marian Hatcher shares how her trafficking situation negatively impacted her credit score.
Polaris Action: Provided background information to Congressional staff
- JUNE 2021** — Debt Bondage Repair Act is introduced.
Polaris Action: Helps amend the bill text to cover more survivors and make the process easier for them
- FALL 2021** — **Polaris Action:** Advocates with individual Congressional offices to support passage of the bill
- DECEMBER 2021** — The Debt Bondage Repair Act passes and is signed into law!
- FEBRUARY 2022** — **Polaris Action:** Briefs the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) as they begin drafting the process for implementing the bill
- APRIL 2022** — The CFPB publishes the draft implementation rule for public comment.
Polaris Action: Submits recommendations and shares a guide to help survivor networks and partner organizations submit their own comments
- JULY 2022** — Implementation rule goes into effect, and first survivors are able to benefit.
- AUGUST 2022** — **Polaris Action:** Releases a guide and training video for survivors and service providers to navigate the process
- SEPTEMBER 2022 AND ONGOING** — **Polaris Action:** Discusses implementation with Congressional offices, CFPB, and government agencies to share challenges and improve the process for survivors

HUMAN TRAFFICKING 101

By the end of 2022, approximately 9,500 people had taken Polaris's online training.





Behind the Scenes

After over two years of remote operations, Polaris returned to the office in a hybrid work model in 2022. **We're grateful to our entire team and all of our supporters for sustaining our impact through the pandemic!**

With the return to our hybrid model, we're excited about the opportunities we have to deepen our commitment to **Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI)**. Polaris is fighting for a world that is just and equitable — where the abuse and exploitation of the most vulnerable for the profit of those in power cannot survive.

For this world to become a reality, we must demonstrate these values out into the world. It's why we take a **racial, gender, and economic justice approach to fighting trafficking**, knowing that people of color, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, youth in or exiting the foster care system, and those impacted by poverty are most vulnerable to trafficking — and often most criminalized once they've been exploited. And for Polaris to reflect JEDI values into the world, **we must cultivate and protect them within our organization, among our employees, and in our culture and processes.**

For example, one piece of our strategy is reducing hiring and other implicit bias, educating ourselves and creating more opportunities for prospective staff to be seen for their abilities and experience. We have prioritized writing more inclusive job descriptions, reviewing blind resumes, and implementing a universal and consistent recruitment process.

Both external and internal facets of our JEDI commitment are critical to building that just and equitable society where **every human has the freedom to choose how they live and work.**

Polaris's Funding Partners

Human trafficking is a criminal industry generating over \$150 billion a year — demanding a variety of partners to make a difference. From justice-minded foundations to corporations in hospitality, transportation, social media, and finance, Polaris is grateful for our partners' investments in the fight.

SPOTLIGHT ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS:

Disrupting Trafficking Networks

Traffickers use financial institutions to exploit and control their victims in nearly every scenario. They also use these institutions to launder their ill-gotten gains.

In partnership with PayPal, Polaris's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) brings together the anti-money laundering, banking, and law enforcement communities with the expertise of human trafficking survivors and allies in the anti-trafficking field. As the only such unit housed in a nonprofit, Polaris's FIU nurtures a nuanced understanding of trafficking and associated financial patterns, while working with partners to ensure that anti-money laundering efforts are both effective and responsible.

- As of the end of 2022, **nine financial institutions receive intelligence packages and strategic reporting** on typologies and best practices to help identify trafficking networks.
- Our **Anti-Money Laundering/Human Trafficking Working Group brings together 15 banks and financial institutions** to share information about current trafficking trends and effective research methodologies.

"It has been our privilege to partner with Polaris in our shared desire to create a world free of slavery in all its forms. Early in our journey as a funder in the anti-trafficking space, Polaris was a key teacher on our learning curve of the interlocking vulnerabilities that make so many human beings fall into the grim web of trafficking. We are so grateful for our partnership with Polaris as a leader in stewarding greater resources to invest in the world we all want for ourselves and the next generation — one free of enslavement, where all human beings can thrive together in peace and shared liberation."

– Emily Nielsen Jones
Founding Partner and Trustee, Imago Dei Fund

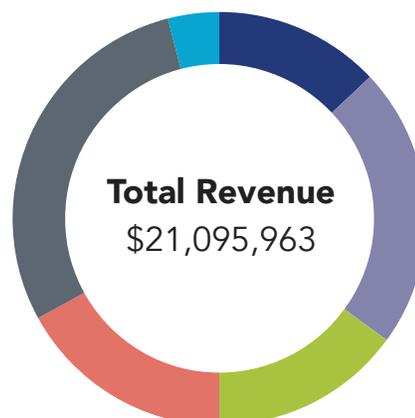
GIVING FOR GOOD

A Note from
Imago Dei Fund

Financial Summary – 2022

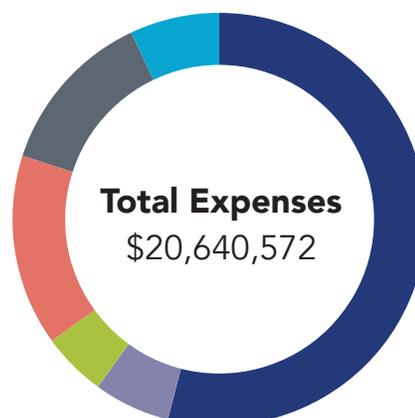
REVENUE

Corporate Donations (13%)	\$2,821,281
Government Grants (22%)	\$4,519,000
Individual Donations (15%)	\$3,156,221
Private Foundations (17%)	\$3,620,880
Donated Goods and Services (29%)	\$6,120,000
Other Income (4%)	\$858,581 (PPP loan forgiveness and interest)



EXPENSES

Trafficking Hotline (54%)	\$11,139,880 (\$6.1M in-kind)
Learning, Innovation and Data Systems (6%)	\$1,186,807
Strategic Initiative – Labor Trafficking (5%)	\$1,102,683
Other Programs (15%)	\$3,029,509
Administration (13%)	\$2,785,914
Fundraising (7%)	\$1,395,779



ENDING NET ASSETS \$7,072,406

Note: These financials are pending audit completion and Board approval.

ABOUT POLARIS

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U.S. NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE



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