

A Lasting Commitment to Silicon Valley's Nonprofit Sector: **Grantee Spotlight**



Founded in 1979, Friends for Youth (FFY) is a nationally recognized organization that supports at-risk youth through mentoring services in Redwood City, San Mateo County. FFY supports over 200 youth each year through one-on-one and group mentoring programs and has provided training and technical assistance through its Mentoring Institute. Chief Operating Officer, Karen Wilmer, referred to the organization as “small but mighty,” with less than ten full-time employees and recent annual expenses of \$585,000. Its programs depend on a network of roughly 200 adult volunteers who provide quality mentorship and support.

FFY has received seven consecutive Sobrato GOS grants, starting in 2005. Prior to that, FFY received targeted grants from the Foundation to support program expansion, volunteer recruitment, and salary and benefits for key staff. Chief Executive Officer Becky Cooper spoke of the importance of a lasting commitment to GOS, and remarked, **“You see changes, growth, and [new] initiatives, but Sobrato has held on to supporting core programs. And so many times that does not happen.”**



Grant Decision Year	Grant Amount	Org. Budget	Full-time Employees	Full-time Volunteers	Total Beneficiaries
2005	\$30,000	\$719,000	-----not available-----		
2007	\$51,250	\$1,033,000	6	150	110
2009	\$57,400	\$1,024,000	5	200	131
2011	\$30,750	\$585,000	8	200	217
2013	\$32,800	\$502,000	5	250	200
2015	\$28,700	\$567,000	4	225	183
2017	\$43,050	\$594,000	5	N/A ^{xvi}	282

^{xvi} Sobrato no longer documents the number of full-time volunteers at an organization.

“[FFY’s] services are provided by mentors who need to be trained, screened and overseen [by staff],” explained Cooper. As such, FFY has dedicated most of its general operating support dollars to staff salaries and benefits. The organization has used GOS funds to help fund new positions, including marketing and outreach staff in 2007 and program staff in 2011 and 2013.

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In 2009, shortly after the economic recession, FFY used GOS funds to restore staffing levels so they could “maximize services, focus on quality, set future goals, and collaborate effectively.”



In addition to supporting staff salaries and benefits, **FFY used Sobrato’s GOS match requirement to build its fundraising capacity.** Between 2009 and 2013, FFY increased their leverage of the match challenge—raising more than the challenge goal—from 11 percent to 65 percent, largely through first-time and individual donors. Cooper remarked that the match is a “great incentive” and well-received by prospective donors. While Wilmer agreed that the match is appealing, especially for individual donors, she added that recently “there is so much

competition for funding it has made it not as impactful”, acknowledging that “it is partially on us to [better] communicate to our donors”, though a new marketing approach from Sobrato could also be helpful. Reflecting on the value of GOS overall, Cooper emphasized that **“GOS enables us to do the whole thing, and look at sustainability as well as programs.”**

Both Cooper and Wilmer shared that new challenges are emerging for Silicon Valley’s youth, including increased depression, high levels of stress in response to the current discourse on immigration among Hispanic youth, and increased isolation because of technology. They hold that, although the experiences of Silicon Valley’s youth change over time, mentoring is a consistent need across generations.