

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



SOMOS Mayfair (SOMOS), located in East San Jose’s Mayfair neighborhood, works to support children, organize families, and connect neighbors to uplift the dreams, power, and leadership of the community and address systemic inequities. In the words of Executive Director Camille Llanes-Fontanilla, Mayfair has been “a landing pad for immigrants from across the globe for generations, and has contributed to the innovation and vibrancy of [Silicon] Valley.” SOMOS’ core programs include preparing children to succeed in school through a newly-opened Family Resource Center and other partnerships, empowering parents and residents through promotor leadership development, and supporting community engagement and organizing. Since its founding in 1997, SOMOS has developed a reputation for deep and authentic grassroots leadership. Llanes-Fontanilla explained the importance of this commitment to the Mayfair community, noting that, “Organizations come into our community because there's grant funding to come in, but they're not here for the long haul...We're a reputable organization that has stood with the community for twenty years, and they trust us because of that.”

SOMOS secured its first Sobrato GOS grant in 2013 and has received two additional GOS grants since then (see below). It has also received two grants as part of Sobrato’s 21st Century Education initiative.



SOMOS’ Director of Fund Development, Jessica Paz-Cedillos, characterized receiving unrestricted funds to build capacity and infrastructure as “amazing,” adding that Sobrato is one of the few foundations that provides GOS. Kathy Ericksen, Director of Finance, values Sobrato’s understanding of “the local landscape and what they’re funding” and its emphasis on communicating regularly with other funders in the region. She also noted Sobrato’s “presence and reputation” in Silicon Valley.

Grant Decision Year	Grant Amount	Org. Budget	Full-time Employees	Full-time Volunteers	Total Beneficiaries
2013	\$55,350	\$1.2 million	12	75	550
2015	\$112,750	\$1.4 million	15	130	847
2017	\$159,900	\$2.3 million	15	not avail.	1,100

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After the economic recession—during which its primary focus was on sustaining existing programs and services—SOMOS turned its attention to two key areas: 1) ensuring that all staff receive a living wage; and 2) updating infrastructure, including technology (e.g., purchasing Salesforce), hardware (e.g., acquiring new computers and printers), and facilities improvements (e.g., painting) to support the organization's fast growth. According to Llanes-Fontanilla, GOS from Sobrato and others provided critical support for those activities. She noted, "I don't think we would be able to [pay living wages to all of our employees] without GOS, [and] Salesforce was all paid for by GOS grants."



Over the past few years, SOMOS has grown substantially, increasing its budget and the number of full-time and temporary employees. During this time, SOMOS' focus has been on expanding programs while continuing to build the fundraising and administrative capacity needed to support its growth. Paz-Cedillos explained, "We are actually in an expansion mode; we've even added a new program. Up to a year ago we were focused on capacity; now we're at a point where we're adding new things."

Llanes-Fontanilla reflected, **"Being able to grow the capacity of our organization has been the single most important thing that has come out of GOS."**

Sobrato staff noted that SOMOS made large strides in recent years in securing new individual donors and increasing the amount of money given by existing donors. Current funders often help connect SOMOS with new supporters, and Sobrato has been key in this respect. "In the last three, four years," according to Llanes-Fontanilla, "we have done phenomenally well with word-of-mouth and the cross-sharing of information between funders." She added that, in order to build inroads with other key local funders, "[we initially had] to secure one key funder—which in this case was Sobrato—and then over time be able to demonstrate our impact." In addition to fundraising, Paz-Cedillos highlighted the organization's need for contracts management to keep up with new funders' requirements (including government contracts), as well as inter-agency partnerships, such as the one that SOMOS manages for its Family Resource Center.

Given the current political and economic climate, SOMOS' work to support Mayfair's students and families is more crucial than ever. Paz-Cedillos commented that "the need has increased, especially with what's happening around housing and gentrification." As SOMOS continues to expand, GOS will provide critical resources to bolster its organizational capacity. Regarding the essential role of that GOS plays in supporting organizational infrastructure, Paz-Cedillos reflected that Sobrato is "one of the few funders that get it, and they just need to keep pushing, talking about it, and making it a priority."