

# IMPACT REPORT FY 2020



RELEASED SEPTEMBER 2021



# POWERON SUPPORTERS



FACEBOOK     



Kelli & Jacques van Gool



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# A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



2020 was a year that the world will remember for decades to come but unlike the previous global pandemic in 1918, it will be a global event that highlighted just how important technology has become in our daily lives, especially for communities like the LGBTQ+ community. Our research this year strives to better understand the way our program technology and tech overall truly benefit and impact the LGBTQ+ community. From launching creative solutions to get centers online in the beginning of the pandemic to initiating special COVID grant applications, we worked to meet our community where they were and navigate the past 18 months.

With this past year firmly planted in our minds, it is now, more than ever, important that industry leaders, policy makers, elected government officials and non-profit organizations listen to the LGBTQ+ community, learn from the lessons of the past year and include the changes into everything we do. Access to the Internet is not a luxury, it is the key to survival and to having an equal chance in life.

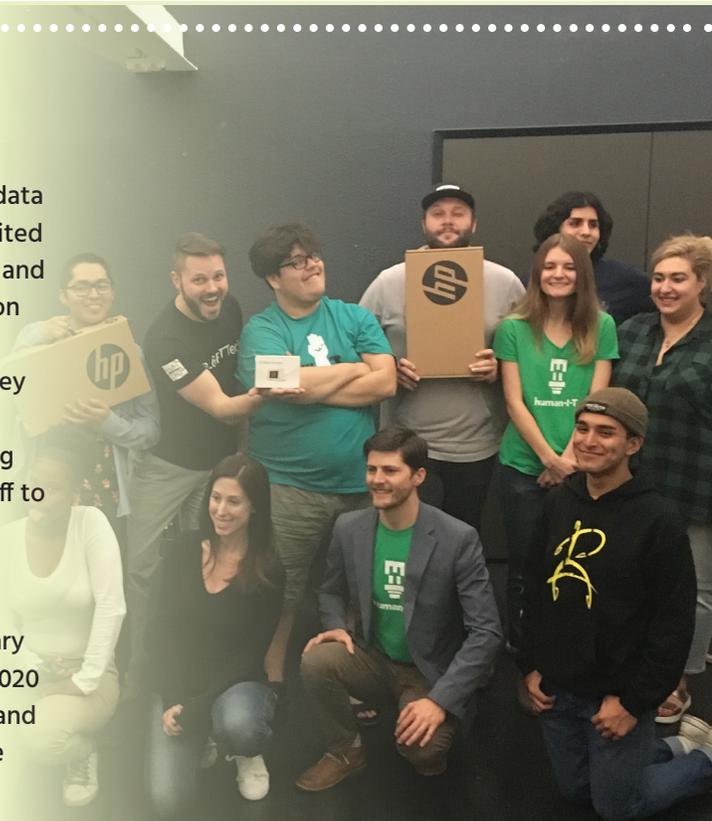
Thank you to all the PowerOn Program grantees for stepping up, being creative and supporting our community through a difficult and challenging year. It is because of you that our community had access when the world shut down.

*Christopher B. Wood  
Executive Director, LGBT Tech*

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is a compilation of quantitative and qualitative impact data from PowerOn's work with 46 LGBTQ+ organizations across the United States in 2020. Despite an extremely challenging year full of health and safety concerns, lack of physical access to resources, and a transition to a predominantly online way of life, our centers got creative and maintained a high level of service to their clients at a time when they needed them the most. PowerOn and LGBT Tech were able to step in to provide discounted HIPAA-compliant Zoom videoconferencing service, mini tech grants, and resources to help centers convert staff to work remotely and handle increased community needs.

The data, quotes, and anecdotes presented in the following report were collected from participating PowerOn centers between January 20, 2021 and June 18, 2021 based on numbers recorded during the 2020 calendar year. All data was self-reported by centers from prompts and questions from an electronic LGBT Technology Institute survey. The data was analyzed and organized by LGBT Technology Institute.



# POWERON LEADERSHIP

## **ELLIE BESSETTE | Director of Programs**

With a background in fundraising, Ellie empowers LGBTQ+ individuals by providing hardware (computers, tablets, laptops and cell phones), technology education, and information about low cost broadband to LGBTQ+ centers across the country. Ellie also manages the marketing and development operations for the program and oversees the application process for new LGBTQ+ centers to join PowerOn.



## **CARLOS GUTIERREZ | General Counsel**

Deputy Director and General Counsel to LGBT Tech, Mr. Gutierrez is an attorney with extensive experience in both business and legal affairs. His in-depth understanding of technology, telecommunications and long-term strategic planning stems from his successful career in telecommunications, both for public and private sector organizations including the Federal Communications Commission and Discovery Communications. Mr. Gutierrez served as a Legal Associate at the Washington, D.C. law firm of Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo.



## **CHRISTOPHER B. WOOD | Executive Director, LGBT Tech**

A leading entrepreneur, Christopher Wood has founded three non-profits focused on the LGBTQ+ community, one for profit B2B and B2C company, taught as an adjunct professor around entrepreneurship and spoke at over 100 events in the past 10 years. His drive and passion truly took shape at 25 years old when he was taken hostage by the first suicide bomber in the US and realizing from cradle to grave, this life is short and it was on him to make his dreams come true. To date, he has grown all his non-profit or for profit ventures from a small idea to successful organizations employing over 15 people. Mr. Wood currently holds positions as the Executive Director & Co-Founder, LGBT Tech – Chief Operating Officer, Redwood & Co. – President & Founder, Shenandoah LGBTQ Center. In addition to his professional achievements, Mr. Wood's proudest personal achievements over the past 10 years are becoming a foster to adopt parent and building a beautiful family with his husband.





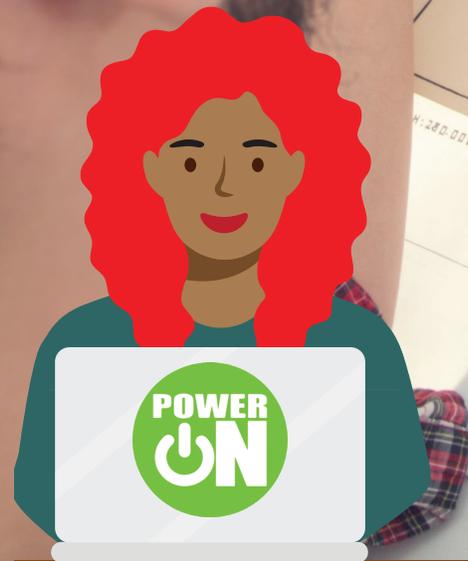
# POWER ON

“In a year when most of our services needed to be transitioned to a digital format, it was more critical than ever to have the technology we needed for each staff member to connect online.”

—Bradbury-Sullivan, LGBT Community Center, Allentown, PA

“We used the technology with our participants to complete the Census 2020, applications for food benefits, medical screenings, mental health appointments, complete job-related tasks like time sheets, schedule visits with medical providers, and personal appointments to pay bills.”

—Waves Ahead, San Juan, PR



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Purpose of the PowerOn Impact Report

The Annual PowerOn Impact Report assesses and determines the impact of the PowerOn program on the LGBTQ+ communities through our partner centers (grantees) and their clients over the previous calendar year. By collecting, evaluating, and understanding the information collected, LGBT Tech can not only evaluate the program's impact for the previous year but over a multi-year period to better understand trends or challenges, all of which help LGBT Tech determine a plan for the upcoming grant cycles and make any adjustments to increase the effectiveness of the program's offerings. Most importantly, it allows the program to continue to meet the LGBTQ+ community where they are when it comes to digital connectivity. The report is designed to provide a snapshot of our work over the past year, update you on news, progress, challenges and successes, as well as to increase overall support for, and awareness of, the program.

## The Year Overall

2020 was a challenging year with many changes and unexpected developments. The needs of the LGBTQ+ community and LGBTQ+-serving organizations changed frequently and suddenly over the course of the year and PowerOn stepped up to meet these needs and adapt to the changes. Most notably, COVID shed light on the importance of connectivity for all, and the struggles of those who are unable to afford a connection or do not have it available to them because of their location. While lack of connectivity has long been, and continues to be, a very real challenge for the LGBTQ+ community, the general public finally understands not being connected and the compounding issues associated with disconnection. Internet and an internet-accessible device are essential to our way of life and those without these resources are at a notable disadvantage in many aspects of life. This is why the PowerOn Program works to make technology, connectivity, and resources accessible to all LGBTQ+ individuals and organizations.

## Key Takeaways, Successes, and Challenges

Most notable in 2020 were the large numbers of individuals reached by the distribution of substantial technology grants. While many grantees had to postpone receiving their grants until their physical space reopened, they had a new need for staff technology and resources to continue services remotely. PowerOn provided affordable HIPAA-compliant Zoom licenses to 40 center staff and interns to enable private and secure continuation of counseling and social services online. Over \$47,000 worth of hardware was distributed to partner centers in 46 locations. More than 8,000 individuals utilized PowerOn technology in 2020 with thousands more able to connect to center services through online platforms.

The demographics of our grantees proved to be diverse, spanning all ages and many races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and gender identities. The need for technology is certainly not confined to one demographic group. COVID presented a unique challenge and drove an increased need for technology and PowerOn was able to adapt to meet this need in addition to fulfilling the program's usual grant framework.

## Conclusion and Looking Ahead to Next Year

PowerOn is an impactful program that provides needed services that are not available elsewhere or through other programs. The target audience is being reached on a large scale, but the need remains urgent and PowerOn's role in meeting this need is more crucial than ever. PowerOn will continue to grant technology, advocate on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community on issues of access and representation, and work to bring increased opportunities for connection to the LGBTQ+ communities across the U.S. By continuing to offer annual grants and adding additional grant cycles where needed and where possible, PowerOn will remain an asset to the LGBTQ+ community and fill a gap in services that is severely needed.

# WHAT IS POWERON?

PowerOn is a first-of-its-kind program that distributes technology to LGBTQ+ individuals who are isolated, disadvantaged, or experiencing homelessness across the country through our network of LGBTQ+ grantee organizations. This grantee network (Our PowerOn Partner Centers) allows us to work at a national scale to distribute life-saving technology at the most impactful grassroots level, empowering individuals with the tools to take charge of their circumstance and tackle the digital divide head-on.

# POWER ON

"The Digital Divide is real and you allowed us to help a few community members connect."

—Out Boulder County,  
Boulder, CO

"When I'm alone, my depression/anxiety are heightened, I feel that COVID-19 has robbed me of my coping mechanisms and outlets (which includes connecting with friends and loved ones), and I do not own a smart phone. So with PowerOn, not only was I able to talk to my physicians, but it was a way for me to connect with my friends and loved ones and that kept me alive."

—Phone recipient  
Whitman-Walker Health, Washington, DC



# WHY IS POWERON IMPORTANT?

We live in an age where technology is essential to our way of life. Everything, from job applications to schoolwork, requires an internet-connected device and an internet connection. The LGBTQ+ community is disproportionately affected by the digital divide, now more than ever<sup>1</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced much of our lives into online spaces, which means that those without access to reliable internet or devices have been left without access to school, work, and necessary services. This has been especially impactful for LGBTQ+ individuals, many of whom additionally lost access to LGBTQ+ community centers that they normally rely on for informed care, information, and safe space. Many LGBTQ+ individuals who do not have access to basic broadband were isolated from these spaces and services as everything transitioned online during the pandemic.

PowerOn works to close the digital divide for the LGBTQ+ community. By providing hardware through our ever-expanding network of partner centers we are able to put devices into the hands of those in need of connection. In-center technology helps build community, reach large numbers of center clients, and encourage LGBTQ+ individuals to complete schoolwork or other online needs in a safe and welcoming environment. Our customized tiered-earning programs, tailored to each center's specific needs, reward individuals for their hard work, engagement with their center, and accomplishing personal goals. We provide the tools to allow centers to meet their clients' needs and help them succeed, no matter what success looks like to each client.

"I will be able to communicate and access essential information when I need it when I go to college in the fall in NYC. I will be able to have a GPS to help me navigate around the city as well as have emergency contact information if and when I need it. I will have a sense of safety as I go around the city that will assist me in getting a job and achieving as much success as I can."

—Phone recipient  
Triangle Community Center, Norwalk, CT

"I have successfully gone through an internship where I was able to find my passion. I now have a part time job assisting with Digital Marketing which requires a fully functioning laptop. This technology will help me create graphics that are used for the company's website, and social media. I hope to accomplish new designs and finish my GRE preparation for graduate school."

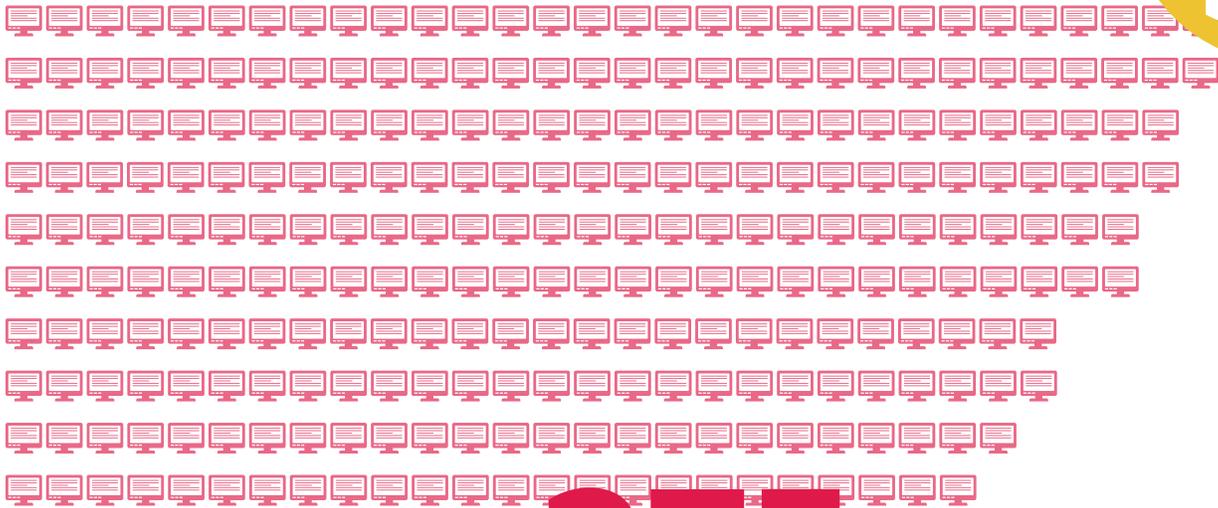
—Laptop recipient  
Brooklyn Community Pride Center, Brooklyn, NY



<sup>1</sup> Why we need a data revolution to make marginalized groups fully visible. (2020, February 28). World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/02/data-exclusion-marginalized-groups-lgbti-disabled-migrants/>

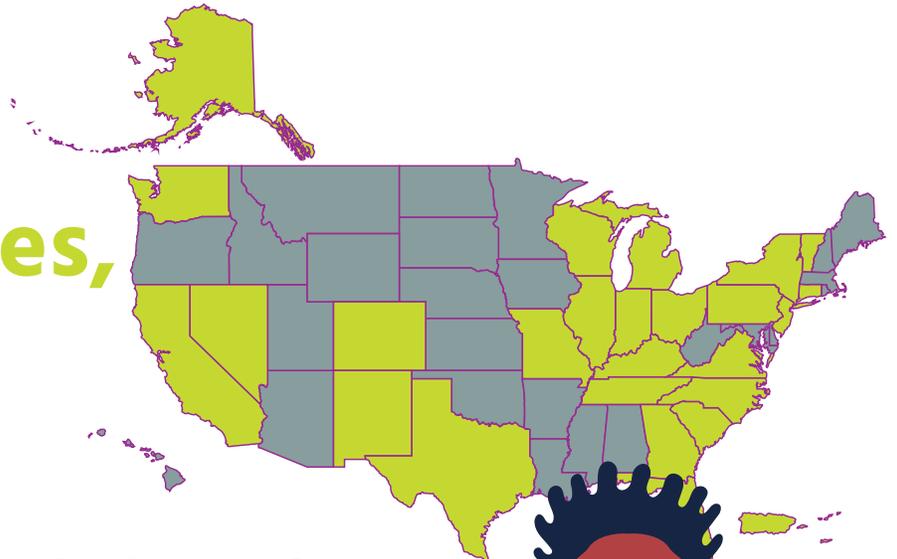
# POWERON'S 2020 SUCCESS BY THE NUMBERS

**\$47,000** of technology devices  
distributed in 2020



**275 devices**

Partner centers in  
**46 locations**  
across **25 states,**  
plus DC and PR



PowerOn has a potential reach of more than  
**55,000 LGBTQ+ individuals**



# HOW GRANTEES ARE USING POWERON TECH

## SAMPLE OF SERVICES OFFERED

Some centers may offer more than one of these services

-  **20** offer drop-in spaces
-  **11** offer life skills classes
-  **20** offer support groups
-  **8** offer housing facilities
-  **14** offer computer labs (PowerOn or other)
-  **4** offer emergency services facilities
-  **13** offer mental health services
-  **4** offer primary care facilities
-  **11** offer HIV testing centers
-  **1** offered food pantries
-  **11** offer libraries
-  **OTHERS:** GSA in schools, direct financial assistance, senior services, consent/safer sex education, workforce development, youth services (2), leadership development

## SUCCESS BY THE NUMBERS

- 156** users each week (8112 annually)
- 79** in past year applied for a job
- 34** in past year earned GEDs or applied for an education program
- 87** in past year completed schoolwork
- 48** in past year found stable housing
- 82** individuals earned their own device through their center's tiered earning incentive program

"A youth participant who is currently utilizing one of the PowerOn laptops to work on her GED and connect with supportive services shared that her life right now is feeling better than it has ever felt."

—*Choosing Our Roots*  
Anchorage, AK



# POWERON CENTERS

**46 locations  
across 25 states,  
plus DC and PR, serving  
55,429 LGBTQ+ individuals**



"The technology grant from PowerOn has ensured that more of our folks have access to a phone and is a critical help."

—*Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM*



## Number of centers per state (as of 2020)

- AK-1
- CA-5
- CO-2
- CT-1
- DC-2
- FL-2
- GA-1
- IL-2
- IN-1
- KY-1
- MI-1
- MO-1
- NC-2
- NJ-1
- NM-1
- NV-1
- NY-5
- OH-2
- PA-2
- PR-1
- SC-2
- TN-2
- TX-1
- VA-2
- VT-2
- WA-1
- WI-1

“Community members who utilized PowerOn technology through our center were able to create a mutual aid network and safety net through our Mutual Aid Program that works specifically to encourage BIPOC TGNC individuals to organize around barriers/obstacles around HIV preventative care. A lot of the community members engaged in the program didn’t know one another beforehand and they have been able to build strong relationships with their cohorts that will hopefully stay with them for the rest of their lives.”

—Brave Space Alliance, Chicago, IL

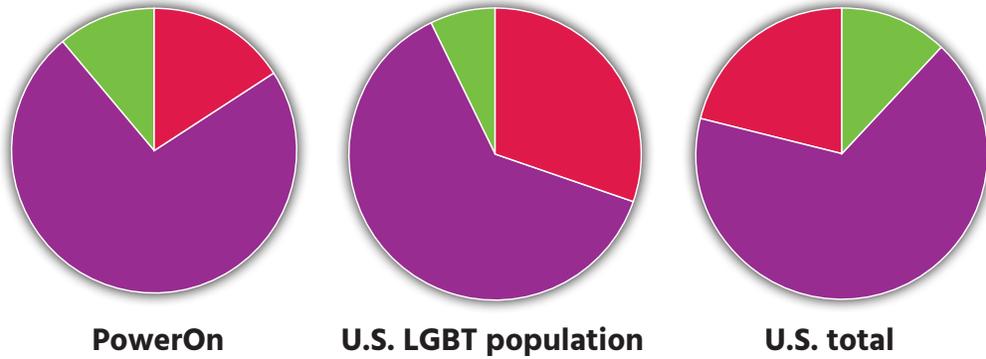


“For the first time in my life, I feel validated as a lesbian woman. I feel that I can live my life as I should have done since coming out. I can complete all my appointments, I have a great therapist, and I don’t miss any visits thanks to the technology lended. I’m grateful for the staff, computers, and environment.”

—Waves Ahead, San Juan, PR

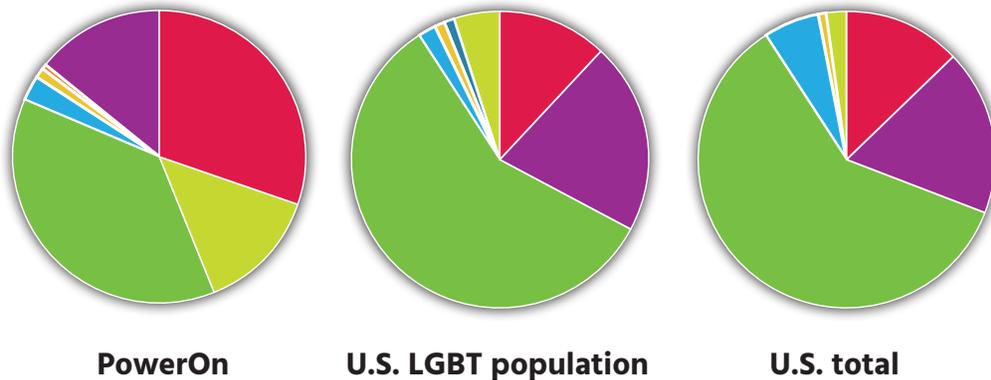
# THE MAKEUP OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

## AGE



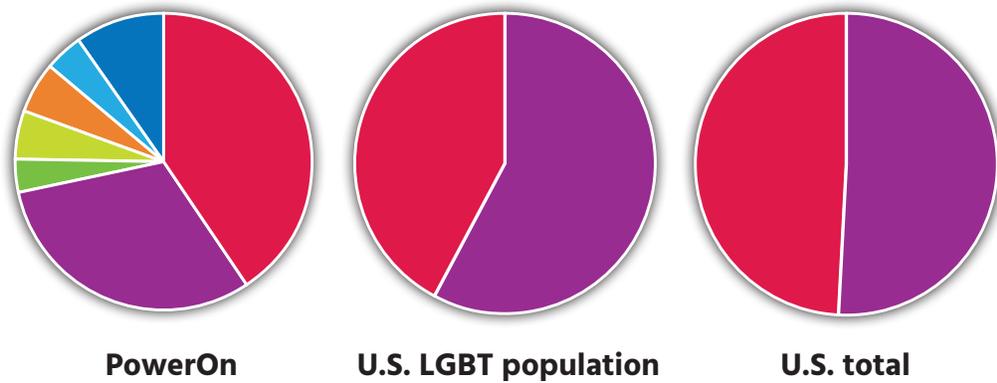
● 24 and under	(8598) 16%	30%	12%
● 25-64	(40175) 73%	62%	67%
● 65+	(6263) 11%	7%	21%

## RACE



● Black or African-American	30.5%	12%	13%
● Hispanic or Latinx	13.5%	21%	18%
● White	37.6%	58%	60%
● Asian	2.7%	2%	6%
● American Indian or Alaskan Natives	1.1%	1%	1%
● Middle Eastern or North African	0.1%	No data	No data
● Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.5%	1%	<1%
● Other	14%	5%	2%

## GENDER



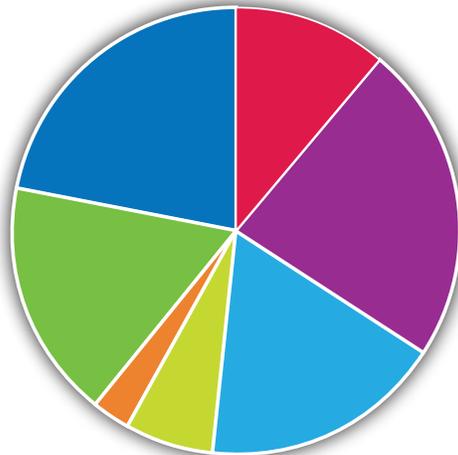
● Male	40.8%	58%	51%
● Female	31.1%	42%	49%
● Trans Men	3.6%		
● Trans Women	5.2%		
● genderqueer/ gender nonconforming	5.7%		
● Nonbinary	4%		
● Other	9.7%		

The United States does not collect data on genders other than male and female. PowerOn and LGBT Tech are actively working to ensure all gender identities are represented in surveys and statistics collected by the government, such as the U.S. Census.

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

### PowerOn

- Lesbian 11.2%
- Gay 23%
- Bi 17.5%
- Queer 6.5%
- Questioning 2.7%
- Straight 17.2%
- Other 21.8%



"Our clients enjoy that they can come and work on their computer work, and that these laptops and printer have helped our job readiness program expand."

—Henderson Equality Center,  
Henderson, NV



Source for U.S. LGBT data: The Williams Institute

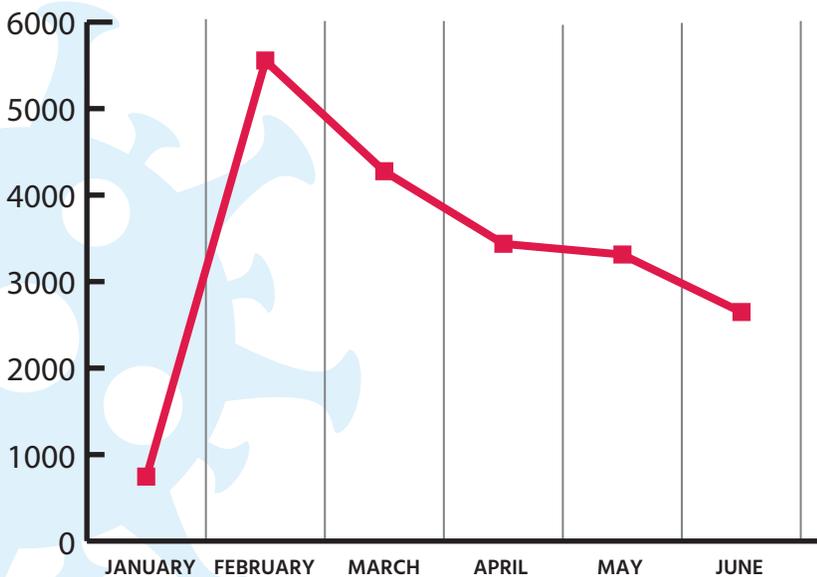
Source for U.S. total data: U.S. Census Bureau

# COVID MINI GRANT PROGRAM

In November 2020 PowerOn launched its COVID Mini Grant program to assist centers with special needs arising from the global pandemic. The unanticipated change from normal operations to virtual services and remote work left centers scrambling to find resources to keep their programs operating and their staff able to assist clients from their home offices. Many center staff did not have access to a laptop making their jobs next to impossible to conduct remotely. Programs such as support groups and mental health counseling had to quickly pivot to a telehealth model, leaving many participants unable to join without an internet connected device in their possession. PowerOn provided staff-use laptops, tablets, and other devices through this special grant cycle, helping to alleviate the strain of COVID on centers' already limited technology budgets.

This mini grant was supported by T-Mobile.

## INDIVIDUALS SUPPORTED DURING COVID WITH THE MINI GRANT PROGRAM



DATE	INDIVIDUALS
January	748
February	5554
March	4275
April	3437
May	3313
June	2649

The number of individuals supported by this mini grant follows an expected pattern. In its first month, the granted technology was being set up, distributed, or advertised to grantees' clients, resulting in a smaller number of users and beneficiaries than in later months. Once word of the devices spread throughout the communities, users and beneficiaries increased substantially. By March, April, and May people were beginning to receive their vaccines, and restrictions and closures were beginning to ease, decreasing the number of people reliant on these devices as libraries, community organizations, and medical offices reopened to the public. This trend continued into June, the final month of reporting, as more and more people began to return to their normal, pre-COVID routines.

Devices granted for this special grant cycle included laptop and desktop computers, tablets, printers, and smartphones.

Grantee centers used the devices for support/social groups, education, case management, emergency services, mental and primary healthcare, job readiness training, food banks, and more!



**Kansas City Center for Inclusion, Kansas City, MO**

“Our center has seen an influx of homeless youth throughout this year, especially given the strain related to COVID-19. The technology made available through the PowerOn grant allowed us to provide yet another community resource for populations hit hardest by the pandemic.”



**Whitman-Walker Health, Washington, DC**

“We partnered with PowerOn at a very critical time in public health, July of 2020. During this time COVID-19 had forced folks to stay home and quarantine. This meant clients relying on technology for everything...most importantly, their healthcare. All services at WWH moved to the telehealth platform to ensure the safety of our patients and staff members. The folks who have been able to access technology through the PowerOn program always expressed how, if it were not for PowerOn, they would have contracted COVID [because of having to break quarantine rules to meet their basic needs].”



**Brooklyn Community Pride Center, Brooklyn, NY**

“One of our gender non-confirming youth in Pride Path lost their job due to COVID-19 and struggled to participate in a now completely remote world without a personal laptop. While they were able to complete their remote internship using a basic tablet and phone, the lack of computer prevented them from connecting more fully with coworkers and finding employment. Through Pride Path’s partnership with PowerOn, they received a laptop that has allowed them to not only continue to complete virtual college courses but to apply for jobs in their field of interest providing them with a greater sense of stability and access career opportunities.”



**Shenandoah LGBTQ Center, Staunton, VA**

“One of our transgender clients received a cell phone when theirs was broken. This connectivity allowed them to access mobile phlebotomy services and attend their trans health appointments via telehealth. It greatly reduced their anxiety around being in public spaces during the pandemic and allowed them to continue their hormone therapies despite being isolated at home.”



**Youth OUTright, Asheville, NC**

“An unanticipated silver lining to the challenges of the pandemic has been the access that virtual programs offer some of our most rural youth. Young people who could only make an in-person group once a month or once every other month are now in our spaces multiple times a week!”

# COVID IMPACT

## COVID VIRTUAL HAPPY HOURS

During the pandemic, LGBT Tech and PowerOn hosted a series of laid-back weekly Zoom calls to answer questions on LGBTQ+ issues around tech and COVID-19. Topics ranged from sharing tips and information about VPNs and protecting privacy on public hotspots to staying connected and social online while staying safely distanced in person. These happy hours helped LGBTQ+ organization staff and leaders pivot their strategies and plans for operating virtually as well as provided a sense of connection, camaraderie, and hope.

One attendee, the leader of a group of older LGBTQ+ adults in the Northeast shared a positive spin on the isolation many were feeling at the beginning of the pandemic. Her group members, many of whom were homebound or had difficulty going to in-person meetings or sessions, were feeling more involved and connected than ever before. Previously, they had been firmly in the minority when attending events through video calls and often felt they were a burden to those meeting in person who had to make the group accessible for those calling in. When all their peers transitioned to online-only forms of meeting because of COVID, those who had been using virtual meeting platforms for years finally felt included and equal.

These happy hours helped LGBTQ+ organization staff and leaders pivot to prepare for virtual operations as well as provided a sense of connection, camaraderie, and hope.

## HIPAA-COMPLIANT ZOOM SERVICE

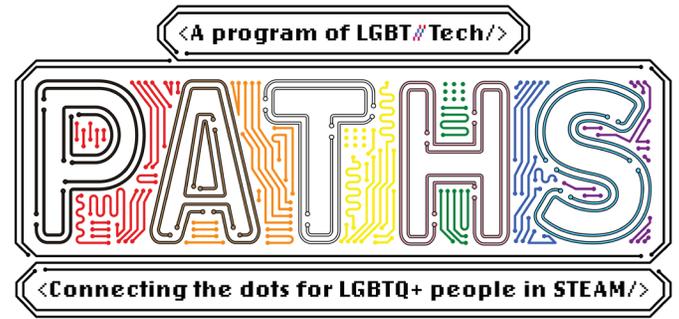
Zoom meetings quickly became a hallmark of the pandemic. Nearly everyone with a desk job was working from home, but business had to continue more or less as usual. Telehealth took off during this time, with virtual medical appointments providing critical services safely. Despite the relaxation of HIPAA laws during COVID, many providers still wanted to maintain their high standards of patient security and confidentiality, especially those providing services to LGBTQ+ clients. At the time COVID began, Zoom offered a HIPAA-compliant healthcare plan at a cost of about \$20 per licensed user with a minimum of 10 users required to subscribe. For LGBTQ+ centers offering mental and primary healthcare on a virtual platform, this meant an unplanned expense of at least \$200 per month in their already strained budgets. LGBT Tech and PowerOn knew there had to be a more affordable solution. So, LGBT Tech purchased a HIPAA-compliant Zoom plan and broke up the licenses as needed for centers looking to use the service providing as few as one or two licenses to a center. LGBT Tech allowed centers to afford this service without breaking the bank. This offering was used heavily, connecting thousands of individuals to service providers during a time of extreme need.

## BY THE NUMBERS:

- **Over 40** licenses were provided
- Each month our users averaged **150,000 minutes** connecting **3,000 participants**
- On average over **700 meetings** were held each month

# PATHS

PATHS is a program to inspire and motivate LGBTQ+ youth and young adults interested in careers in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) fields through storytelling by current LGBTQ+ STEAM professionals.



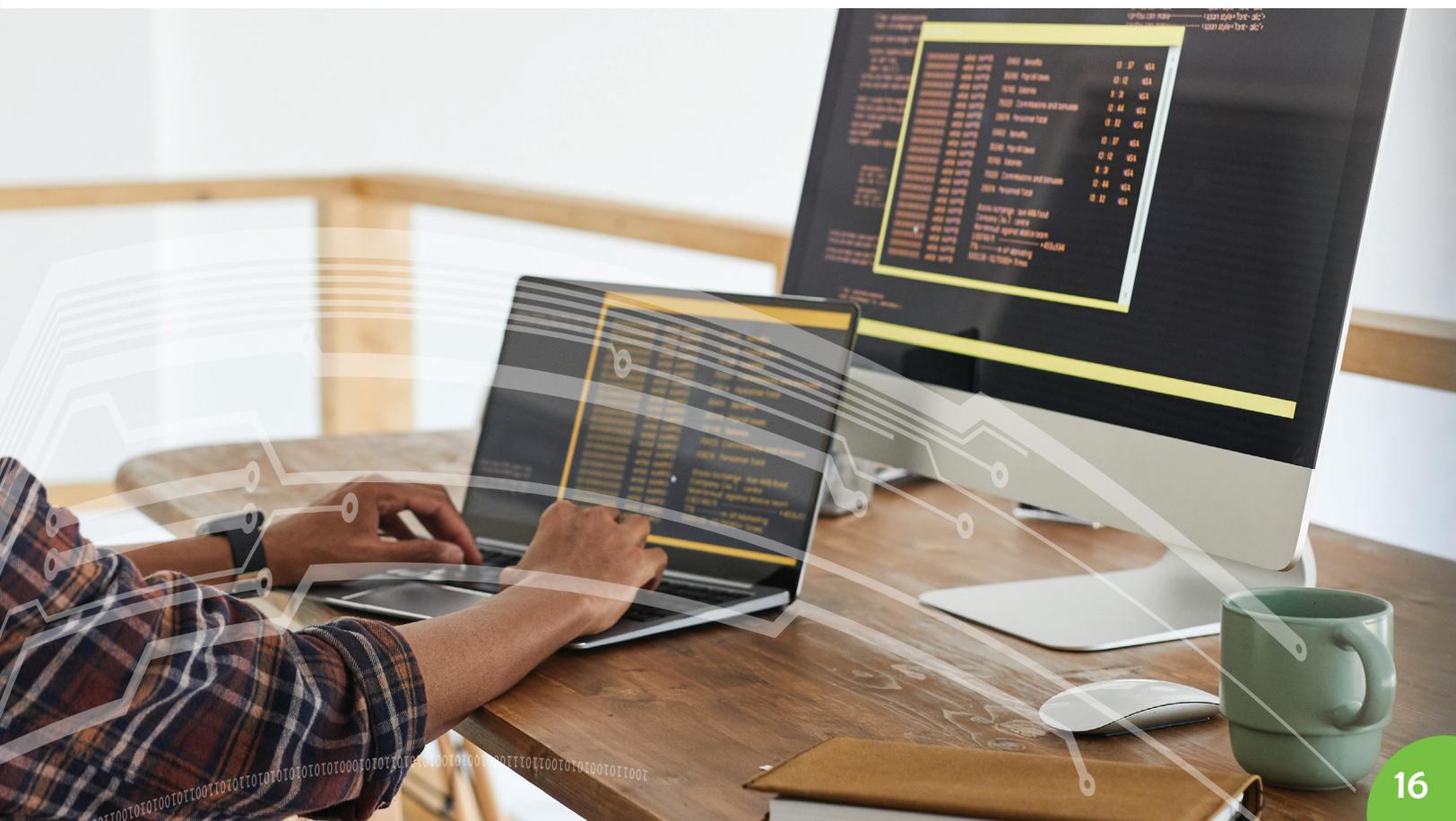
[www.lgbttech.org/paths](http://www.lgbttech.org/paths)

## WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH WITH PATHS?

1. Inspire LGBTQ+ youth and young adults to explore their path in STEAM fields.
2. Create interactive opportunities to bring together LGBTQ+ STEAM professionals and LGBTQ youth and young adults.
3. Help LGBTQ+ STEAM professionals pay it forward by inspiring LGBTQ+ youth and young adults to get into STEAM.

By providing a platform for LGBTQ+ STEAM professionals to tell their stories, young people will be able to identify with other LGBTQ+ people that inspire them, find connections with them and their stories, and potentially be empowered to embark on a career path in STEAM. Everyone has a unique story, a unique path, and this program aims to celebrate diversity and differences while seeing the power and connection in our similarities.

Stay tuned for more information about this program later in 2021!



# POWERON AWARDS CEREMONY

PowerOn has built an impressive network of LGBTQ+ partner centers across the United States. 2020 marked the second annual PowerOn Awards Ceremony, honoring these centers, program participants, and supporters who make PowerOn the well-rounded, impactful program it is. 2020's ceremony was held virtually and garnered a lot of support and recognition for the program as well as the people impacted by granted technology.

## 2020 WINNERS

### CHANGE AGENT

#### Dr. Nicol Turner Lee

The Change Agent award honors an individual in public service or social justice whose significant contributions to connectivity have helped support underserved populations, including the LGBTQ+ community.



### ROLE MODEL

#### Jordan Paris

The Role Model award honors a youth who sets the bar for themselves and their peers while participating in the PowerOn Program.



# POWERON AWARDS CEREMONY

## VISIONARY

### Jacques & Kelli van Gool

The Visionary award honors an individual whose work has empowered LGBTQ+ individuals to achieve success through technology and the internet.



## SUPERSTAR CENTER

### Triangle Community Center, Norwalk, CT

The Superstar Center award honors a PowerOn partner center/organization that has made outstanding contributions to the program and to the community the organization serves.

The 2021 PowerOn Awards Ceremony will be held virtually on September 30. Save the date!

