In March 2021, ASA secured a $100 million social bond to further its mission. In the first nine months of the bond spend, ASA has used bond proceeds to expand availability of and access to high-quality products, services and opportunities centered on 6th-12th graders—both in-person and digital—throughout the nation, with emphasis on marginalized or economically disadvantaged communities, and students who have faced barriers to education success. Additionally, ASA has funded programs that seek to achieve wide-reaching system change and fundamentally shift education systems to ensure every student is ready for life after high school. In total, ASA has funded $10.92 million in program activities with the use of bond funds; provided funding to 33 organizations, reaching nearly half a million students through in-person programs provided by partners; and reached 11 million students through digital programs.

ASA provides multi-year commitments to innovative organizations, programs or partners looking to implement ambitious ideas and drive long-term student success outcomes with particular attention on:
- innovations that will transform education, with specific attention on digital solutions and/or solutions to increase student engagement
- partners and programs to reach underserved learners
- programs to build skills that foster employability and build social capital
- programs that encourage postsecondary education success including access to non-traditional paths
- programs that provide professional development for educators to effectively leverage innovative solutions to prepare students for life after high school
- partners to engage in collaborative research, dialogue and collective action to solve nationwide education challenges

**IMPACT FROM BOND-FUNDED PROGRAMS:**
Total Bond spend in 2021 (March 2021- December 2021) $10.92 million

As ASA explicitly stated in the Bond offering, ASA issued the Bonds to:
- increase assistance to a larger number of students and partners
- expand the population served geographically
- bolster digital offering
- direct funds to marginalized or economically disadvantaged communities, and students who face barriers to education success
- affect wide-reaching system change and fundamentally shift education systems to ensure every student is ready for life after high school

While too early in the process to see significant change in student outcomes or systems change, below is a summary of how the Bond has allowed ASA to meet some of these goals at an early stage.
More students reached
Leveraging both internal capabilities and partnerships with others, ASA’s strategic goal is to impact at least 15 million students (totaling approximately 50 percent of the 6-12th grade US population) by 2023.

Students reached in 2021:
   Nearly 11.5 million

Teachers served in 2021:
   Nearly 26,000

Organizations funded in 2021:
   33

Focus on digital initiatives
53% of ASA bond-funded programs included some component of scaling programs through digital initiatives. Such programming included greater reach for ASA’s digital programs Futurescape and Future Network; digital career exploration tools; a number of virtual or hybrid work-based learning tools and experiences; on-line educational contests; entrepreneurship skill building; and new ways of navigating to postsecondary credentials.

Focus on Underserved Learners
75% of the bond funding committed in 2021 went to organizations with the explicit purpose of improving the education and career outcomes for underserved learners, marginalized or economically disadvantaged communities, and students who have barriers to education success. Whether through direct programing to students or systems change efforts, ASA prioritized funding for those with a focus on changing outcomes for high-need students and communities. Additionally, funding through the Catalyze Challenge (detailed below) was focused on promoting the efforts of proximate entrepreneurs—those leaders who come from the communities they seek to serve.

Move the Conversation
In addition to direct funding of programs, ASA also seeks to promote a better understanding of and drive conversation about Gen Z, the education ecosystem for college and career readiness, and the challenges students, educators, families and communities face. ASA’s research reports and thought leadership materials are regularly discussed at national conferences, public events and online forums. ASA funds are used to drive conversation and to support programs that seek wide-reaching system and policy change to fundamentally shift education systems and ensure every student is ready for life after high school.

In 2021, 90% of funding went to national organizations or state-based/local initiatives in communities outside New England.

- National organizations: 13
- State-based or local initiatives serving a targeted community outside of New England: 17
- Organizations only serving a New England state or community in New England: 3

Reach Into Specific States
In addition to the direct-to-student ASA digital initiatives happening in every state, ASA funding went to dedicated initiatives happening in Alabama, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Washington D.C., and Wisconsin.

Increased national impact
Prior to 2022, two-thirds of ASA’s programmatic funding had been committed to organizations primarily serving the New England region of the United States. One of the goals of the ASA Social Bond was to impact the great unmet need nationwide. With the proceeds of the Bonds, ASA has continued in its current service area, while strategically expanding to serve other areas of the country with new and innovative partner opportunities, in-person programing, and/or digitally enabled education solutions that provide a larger opportunity for scale and impact.

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ASA funded three research surveys with Jobs for the Future (JFF) to understand current perceptions from Gen Z, employers and DC insiders about postsecondary education paths that do not include 2- and 4-year degree programs. The first round of research can be found here: https://info.jff.org/degrees-of-risk

In addition to research, ASA bond funding produced playbooks for practitioners to put in place the programs and services that ASA believes can have high impact on students.

**Association of Middle Level Education:**
*Career Exploration in the Middle Grades: A Playbook for Educators (amle.org)*

**Clayton Christenson Institute:**
*5 Steps for Building & Strengthening Students’ Networks - Who you know matters*

**Impact Systems:**
70% of ASA bond funding went to programs looking to impact systems change in some way or inform improved education policy as a component of their work.

**BOND-FUNDED INITIATIVES**
Below is a summary of Bond-Funded initiatives from March to December 2021. Most of these programs fall into one or more categories of desired impact, but they are categorized below based on the primary outcome the initiative aims to achieve. In addition, it should be noted that outcomes listed are in the early stage of impact and will be continuously tracked for long-term impact in years to come.

**Innovations that will transform education, with specific attention on digital solutions and/or solutions to increase student engagement**

**ASA digital solutions**
ASA believes that one of the most powerful opportunities to impact students at scale is to give them the tools and information they need within the channels they interact with most. ASA has developed free digital tools for students to learn about their interests or aptitudes and match those attributes with potential career paths. We reach students with these tools primarily through social media channels where we know they are already spending a lot of their time. ASA Committed Funds: $800,000

**Futurescape:** This immersive digital platform offers a journey to self-discovery that helps kids realize their passions and find careers that match who they are and what they love. Offering real-world information on career pay ranges, education requirements, industry associations and other criteria, Futurescape enables high school students to form a greater connection between postsecondary education and their intended career path. In 2021, over 4 million users used Futurescape to explore careers ranging from actor to biomedical engineer to fashion designer.

**Satisfaction with Futurescape**

**Thought it was a great platform to explore possible career**

**Learned about what careers and jobs best fit their strengths and attributes**

**Learned about or looked into career and job details to help inform future decisions**

**Found it to be more helpful than other career tools**

**Future Network:** The Future Network is a series of original videos that span five categories and follow Gen Z as they explore and learn about different careers from professionals themselves. In 2021, Future Network episodes were watched over 38 million times by almost 7 million unique viewers.

**Solve Together:** This national competition was conducted digitally and worked with schools to encourage career exploration and real-world skill building among middle school students through project-based learning and teamwork. Students worked together to solve one of four challenges: (1) Building a Colony on Mars (2) Solving Covid-19: A Community Challenge (3) Acting on Climate Change (4) The Economic Impact of Covid-19. “Galactic Girls,” a team of middle school students from Plouffe Academy in Brockton, Massachusetts, won the inaugural national contest with their innovative solution to sustaining life on Mars: USA TODAY. The top three winning teams, as well as the educator award, were selected from 189 total team submissions from 23 schools across 12 states nationwide. ASA Committed Funds: $47,500
Big Picture Learning
A grant to Big Picture Learning (BPL) enabled BPL to increase and accelerate its Learning Through Interests and Internships (LTI) implementation in 150 locations across the state of California, providing workplace learning opportunities for more than 30,000 high school students. This was accomplished by providing professional development to more than 450 educators and school leaders as well as access to ImBlaze, Big Picture Learning’s proprietary internship management system app. Through a second grant, BPL is launching a pilot of B-UnBound, a version of ImBlaze for direct learners. This pilot will bring 2,000 work-based learning experiences to students out of the classroom.
ASA Committed Funds: $850,000

Catalyze Challenge
ASA collaborated with Arnold Ventures, Charter School Growth Fund, and the Walton Family Foundation in a pooled funding effort to award over $4 million to accelerate bold career-connected learning solutions aimed at helping students to better access economic opportunity after leaving school. In 2021, 15 winners were selected from community-based organizations, entrepreneurs, and cross-sector partnerships from across the country to pilot, launch and scale solutions designed for the leaders of tomorrow’s workforce. Grantees with proximate leadership (leaders who come from the communities they serve), that serve a historically underserved group, or serve a rural population were prioritized.

Funded organizations include:

Aecern – At the Cutting Edge of Emerging Career Fields (Florida) engages students grades 6 and up in emerging technologies while working on solutions to urgent, authentic problems facing professionals in these fields. Students engage with career role models virtually on a digital learning platform as they imagine, design, share and pitch their solutions. Pilot program launched in Tampa, FL.

BUILD – BUILDing Generation Entrepreneur (California) supports students from 8th through 12th grade across the nation in building businesses and confidence through an entrepreneurship program that provides mentors and training to set students up for success. BUILD’s mission is to ignite the potential of youth in under-resourced communities to build career success, entrepreneurial mindsets, and opportunity. The aim is to help youth become CEOs of their own lives. BUILD partners with educators across the United States with regional hubs in the San Francisco Bay Area, Washington D.C., Boston and New York. build.org

Building 21 – Launchpad (Pennsylvania) is a new initiative from Building 21 that will directly connect young people to living-wage paying jobs that offer upwardly mobile career opportunities while providing them with the credentials, skills, mindsets, and experience to thrive in these roles. The program will begin preparing students from a network of high schools across Philadelphia during their final two years in high school and will continue in the two years that follow. building21.org

CodeSpeak Labs – The Next Step (California) is a creative agency of BIPOC high school students from underserved communities in California and New York working with professional mentors from CodeSpeak Labs. The agency gives students real-world professional experience doing web development and social media marketing for mission-driven organizations. Students work closely with mentors, including professional graphic designers and web developers. codespeaklabs.com/the-next-step

Collegiate Academies Next Level NOLA (Louisiana) is a free, one-year fellowship for graduating seniors of New Orleans’ Public Schools that counters the obstacles students traditionally face in their postsecondary pursuits. This “bridge year” helps students understand and excel in both high-wage, high-demand careers and higher education through opportunities to earn college credits; gain career-connected learning experiences through training, guest speakers, networking, mentorships, and internships; engage in individualized success coaching and support services; and access tutoring and ACT prep to access scholarships. nextlevelnola.org

Collegiate Edu-Nation – Collegiate Edu-Nation Rural HOPE Project (Texas) is a Texas-based network that works to improve rural student outcomes and rural workforce development by partnering with local school, community and business leaders to establish and support regionally relevant education systems. Their Rural HOPE project supports students from their first day of preschool to the start of a meaningful career. edu-nation.org

Crowder College – With their Digital Pathways in the Rural Heartland initiative (Missouri), Crowder College and Codefi have partnered to reshape the narrative about career opportunities in rural America from one centered on
manufacturing and agriculture to one that includes a flourishing digital workforce. The Digital Pathways in the Rural Heartland offers courses for middle and high school students in rural Missouri to learn about career opportunities and gain professional experience in software development. After completing the coursework from this initiative, students will receive industry-recognized credentials and work experience that opens doors to well-paying careers in the digital economy.

crowder.edu

Cultivate – Cultivate Pathways (nationwide) aims to reduce the gap in educational equity that exists for English language learners. This nationwide program provides paid work-based experiences to English learner students in 11th grade through college, delivering credentials that will lead to higher pay in one year. Students will receive training in industries such as coding, IT and construction, integrated with English language learning. Students will also be provided mentoring relationships and social-emotional supports.

www.cultivatepathways.org

Education Design Lab – Propel Polk! Credentialing 21st Century Skills (Florida) is making students more competitive applicants for colleges and employers by creating credentialed programs for soft skills. In partnership with Polk County Public Schools in Florida and local business and alignment organizations, Education Design Lab is creating a pilot program to teach 450 11th and 12th graders these soft skills. Participating students will receive digital microcredentials they can include on job and college applications. The ultimate goal of this pilot is to see how the intentional teaching of these skills can increase rates of graduation, job placement, and higher education matriculation.

eddesignlab.org

Hack the Hood in Oakland, CA uplifts early career youth and communities of color through tech skill-building programs grounded in justice. They also provide career navigation support that ensures economic mobility. Through this pilot, a one-year community college cohort of learners will work to obtain a Computer Information Systems Associate of Science degree and/or STEM certification and land a paid tech career opportunity. Fellows will receive a monthly stipend and career mobility training, and work with mentors throughout the program. Fellows will be connected to experiential learning opportunities with local small businesses and tech companies and will participate in regular peer and mentor resource sessions.

hackthehood.org

nXu – Career Exploration: Purpose & Identity Development (nationwide). Through nXu’s curriculum, students engage in career exploration through the lens of purpose and identity while cultivating their social and emotional learning skills – and in doing so, the curriculum encourages greater academic engagement, fosters a sense of belonging among students and instills confidence in students to navigate their professional and academic journeys.

xueducation.org/pop

Propel America – The Accelerate America (Louisiana) initiative allows high school graduates to access affordable and quick pathways to a living-wage job and college credits in collaboration with AccelerateU at National Louis University. Participants receive individual guidance and support from a career coach to help them build the skills and competencies necessary to succeed in both higher education and the workplace. The initiative supports a diverse cohort of young adults enrolled in medical assistant certification fellowships in New Jersey, Philadelphia, Chicago, Louisiana, and Rhode Island, with a coaching curriculum that is culturally relevant and invites young people to bring their lived experiences into their learning. Accelerate fellows who complete the program are guaranteed interviews with companies ready to hire.

propelamerica.org

Rural Community Alliance – The Just and Thriving Rural & Remote Futures (Arkansas) initiative aims to bring remote work opportunities to students in rural communities throughout Arkansas. This initiative elevates the voices of rural youth in the larger conversation of remote work and creates mechanisms, using both digital and pop-up gatherings, for youth to design the learning experiences, networks, and programs they need to succeed in remote careers.

tenewrural.org

Trio New College Network – 3-D Learning: A New High School to Career Pathway (New Jersey). Trio New College Network, Gateway U Hybrid College and K-12 education partners LEAD Charter School and Great Oaks Legacy Charter School have come together to create a model aiming to unify three currently disconnected “dimensions” of our current education system – K-12, higher education and workforce development – in order to eliminate barriers to student success. High school students participating in the program via Gateway U, New Jersey’s first hybrid college, will enroll in college-level courses mapped to state graduation requirements, allowing them to earn dual credit. Through a partnership with Southern New Hampshire University’s competency-based education program, College for America, students will take project-based courses designed in collaboration with major
employers to prepare them for the workforce. After graduating high school, students will be automatically accepted into the BA program at Southern New Hampshire University and placed into jobs with local employer partners. Due to the flexible, asynchronous structure of College for America, students will have the opportunity to both work and attend school simultaneously. trionetwork.org

**WeThrive** – WeThrive Education equips underestimated youth to own their future. Youth identify problems in the community, sharpen the ideas into viable micro-enterprises, and use seed funding WeThrive provides to launch solutions, earning real revenues and real traction. This initiative is a work-based learning program helping youth launch and run real businesses. WeThrive leverages a best-in-class curriculum and self-guided interactive modules to activate youth as change-makers who create real companies, earning real revenues as they perfect the practice required to achieve economic prosperity. The organization provides students with mentorships, life skills training, financial training, and funding needed to develop and launch their business ideas. WeThrive aims to support a generation of students to unleash their intellectual and economic potential and close racial wealth and achievement gaps throughout the United States. teamwethrive.org

ASA also committed funding in 2021 to the next round of this collaborative and aims to fund an additional 25 solutions in 2022. Those winners will be summarized in next year’s report. ASA Committed Funds: $3.5 million

**Roadtrip Nation**

ASA is working with Roadtrip Nation to develop and host a middle school digital student hub. Through this work, Roadtrip Nation will provide access to its opportunity youth, work-based experience for mentors and educators to help students develop the skills necessary to successfully navigate career exploration. This middle school digital hub will be distributed to the Association of Middle Level Education’s membership of more than 20,000 educators. ASA Committed Funds: $159,000

**Clayton Christensen Institute**

With a grant from ASA, in collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Genentech, and Walton Family Foundation, the Clayton Christensen Institute was able to advance its mission and produce a Social Capital Toolkit. This playbook is a tool that aims to ensure every student has access to a web of supportive relationships that can help create an array of diverse connections to help them get ahead. This essential resource distilled key research findings and lessons learned through the Institute’s Social Capital R&D Project and empowered more than 21,000 education leaders to take a systematic approach to relationship building. ASA Committed Funds: $75,000

**Junior Achievement of Central Florida**

ASA supported the JA Inspire Virtual Event in Central Florida, bringing innovative career exploration programming to 4,000 eighth grade students. This included both a virtual career fair and curriculum integrated into the classroom. ASA Committed Funds: $25,000

**Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE)**

An ASA grant to the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship has been allocated to the rapid expansion of NFTE’s entrepreneurial education curriculum. This funding allows for additional entrepreneurship education in 11 states in the Midwest, South, and Southeast regions of the country. NFTE’s programs will be available in schools, as well as summer camp and afterschool time programs. Early program outcomes show 430 educators trained and over 25,600 students directly served with programs to build their entrepreneurship skills. ASA continues to invest in NFTE because of its impressive outcomes. One in four NFTE alumni have started at least one business. And NFTE alumni overall (75%) express high levels of satisfaction with their careers, suggesting that the ability to build an entrepreneurial mindset through the NFTE program has resulted in long-term career gains. ASA Committed Funds: $900,000

**Article: 3 Ways to make sure tomorrow’s workforce is future-proof**
Rodel Foundation of Delaware:
ASA joined with major funders, including Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Walton Family Foundation, to provide a combined $15.8 million toward the public-private expansion of Delaware’s Pathways Program, which links education and workforce development programs to let young people gain real-world work experience while in school. With ASA’s funding, Pathways 2.0 will expand into Delaware middle schools, reaching more than 6,000 students and soon growing to reach every middle school student in the state. The investment will also grow the Pathways program in Delaware high schools to reach 32,000 students, or about 80 percent of all students attending Delaware public high schools with career pathway programs and work-based learning opportunities. ASA Committed Funds: $566,666

Article: A new era for career pathways in Delaware

Social Innovation Forum
ASA funded a track for the Social Innovation Forum’s Social Innovator Accelerator, a program that helps high-performing nonprofit organizations gain visibility, expand their networks, and connect with philanthropic and in-kind resources. The ASA-sponsored track, Promoting Career Exploration for Youth through Civic Engagement, focused on models that offer middle and/or high school students opportunities to learn about social issues and advocate for causes that matter most to them while providing experiential learning opportunities that allow young people to develop intentional, transferable skills for school, work, and life. Lowell Community Health Center Teen BLOCK, in Lowell, MA was selected and will be assisted by SIF as they work to support the healthy development of young people and empower them to become leaders in the community. ASA Committed Funds: $100,000

The Blackstone Valley Superintendents’ Consortium (BVSC)
BVSC, which consists of 12 school districts in Central Massachusetts, received a grant that enables the BVSC to take an innovative approach to inter-district collaboration for workforce training. Beginning in the 2021-2022 school year, students from across the 12 districts will have access to alternative pathways to jobs and certifications, opportunities for hands-on learning, and real-world workforce experiences. During the first year, students—regardless of the school in which they are enrolled—will have the opportunity to enroll in computer science courses, such as cybersecurity, programming, and web development, as well as welding and advanced manufacturing classes. Superintendents are working to share resources across districts so that the courses and experiences students have access to are not limited by the zip code in which they reside. ASA Committed Funds: $450,000

Skills for Rhode Island’s Future
ASA funded the continuation of the Skills for RI’s Future’s PrepareRI internship program, which trains high school seniors in business skills and places them in paid summer internships with partner companies. Funding from ASA allowed students to continue participating in a virtual, work-based learning program, as well as receive career coaching throughout the school year for those in the highest need districts in the state. ASA Committed Funds: $500,000

Programs that encourage postsecondary education success including access to non-traditional paths

New Profit

Postsecondary Innovation for Equity (PIE II)
The Postsecondary Innovation for Equity (PIE II) initiative, funded through New Profit in collaboration with a growing list of foundation partners like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Walmart, and the Walton Family Foundation, is focused on supporting young entrepreneurs in the creation of postsecondary pathways and innovations in the education-to-employment space. From this pooled funding, 20 postsecondary innovators will be chosen to build evidence behind new approaches to connecting young adults from low-income communities with the postsecondary credentials and work experience needed to access upwardly mobile careers. With ASA funds, a cohort of five organizations will launch in 2022 and receive in-depth coaching, training, and support from New Profit to scale their models. ASA Committed Funds: $500,000

Partners to engage in collaborative research, dialogue and collective action to solve nationwide education challenges

America Achieves
ASA supported an initiative with America Achieves to collaborate with state officials and policymakers, build resource guides, and build communities of practice, as states worked to direct federal funds allocated from the American Recovery Plan. Working with industry...
experts, efforts were aimed at increasing funding allocations for career readiness initiatives throughout the country. ASA Committed Funds: $400,000

**Association for Middle Level Education**
A grant from ASA allowed for creation of Career Exploration in the Middle Grades: A Playbook for Educators, an online resource center with evidence-based best practices for the implementation of career exploration. This grant also funded the AMLE/ASA Playbook Challenge, a contest aimed at giving middle grade educators the resources needed to initiate meaningful career exploration. 4,400 educators were trained on these resources. ASA Committed Funds: $103,500

**Coalition for Career Development Center**
A research grant to the Coalition for Career Development Center brought together business leaders, educators, and government officials to work collectively toward understanding and improving the condition of career-readiness in the United States. This report was completed and released in May 2022 to set a benchmark of career readiness in the US with the hope of driving awareness on needs and policy change. ASA Committed Funds: $600,000

**Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media, Teacher College, Columbia University**
A research grant to the Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media dedicated funds to support research and reporting on middle schools in the United States. Using longform narrative writing, op-eds and columns, as well as analysis and research, this grant aimed to help the Institute explore a host of factors that influence how children ages 11-14 experience middle school, particularly as it relates to career readiness, mentorship, teacher quality and use of technology in education. ASA Committed Funds: $400,000

**Jobs for the Future (JFF)**
A grant to JFF allowed for the launch of new research and a narrative change campaign to expand understanding and acceptance of high-quality non-degree postsecondary pathways. Through this work, a landscape study will be completed in 2022 to better understand the kinds of postsecondary credentials that exist and available resources to help students better navigate their options. ASA Committed Funds: $650,000

**Thought Leadership Events**
By playing a major role in sponsoring education conferences like SXSW-EDU, ASU/GSV, MENTOR, and the Association of Middle Level Education, ASA was able to drive conversation and put needed attention on issues of career readiness, career connected learning, and digital-direct to kid initiatives. ASA Committed Funds: $345,000

**FY21 Bond Spend**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>America Achieves</td>
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<td>American Student Assistance Digital Programs</td>
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<td>Association for Middle Level Education</td>
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<td>ASU/GSV 2021</td>
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<td>Big Picture Learning</td>
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<td>Blackstone Valley Superintendent's Consortium</td>
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<td>Mentor, The National Mentoring Partnership</td>
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<td>New Profit</td>
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<td>New Venture Fund (15 Catalyze Challenge Winners)</td>
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<td>Rodel Charitable Foundation (Delaware)</td>
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<td>Rodel Charitable Foundation</td>
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<td>(Delaware)</td>
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<td>Roadtrip Nation</td>
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<td>Skills for RI's Future</td>
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<td>Social Innovation Forum</td>
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<td>SXSW-EDU</td>
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