

Annual Report 2021



CivicLex

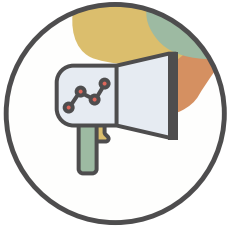


2021 at a Glance



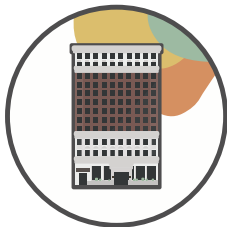
\$344,499

Raised to support local democracy work in 2021



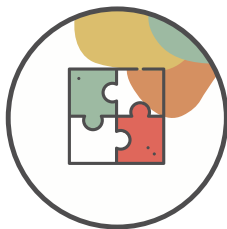
63,000+

Residents reached by CivicLex programs in 2021



13,230

Minutes of city meetings watched, digested, & covered



369

Community programmatic partnerships in 2021



57

In person or virtual civic education & engagement events

“Most people don’t have the time to follow everything that’s going on in city government. CivicLex distills it down to the important stuff, along with analysis, saving all of us time.”

- Dave Cooper, Neighborhood Leader



We're building civic infrastructure that strengthens civic health

The health of American democracy isn't looking great! All across the country, polarization, disinvestments in civic education, and mistrust of institutions have caused a collapse of faith in democracy as a form of government. With no less than our democracy at stake, we cannot afford to continue along the same path.

At CivicLex, we think addressing the crises facing our country can only happen at the local level, in a place-based way. People are the most optimistic about local civic issues - but it's where they are the least engaged. We also know local civic issues are easier to influence, have a more immediate impact on people's lives, and the shared experience makes them easier to build relationships around.

If we want to strengthen our civic health, we need new types of civic infrastructure to help people understand government, get engaged with their communities, and build processes for a healthier democracy. That's what CivicLex is.

CivicLex is different because we do three interconnected things all at once. We provide community civic education, helping residents understand local government, know what is happening in city hall, and get involved with public policy. We build civic transformation projects that change how institutions engage the public. And we also develop relationships between residents and political power holders to build empathy and understanding.

In the years since CivicLex started, we've seen significant changes in Lexington's civic landscape. Our city government uses creative, new approaches to engaging residents like our joint civic artist in residence program. We're also seeing more residents are participating in civic life. In 2016, there were nine uncontested city council races. In 2022, there are none. People have used CivicLex resources to advocate for ARPA funding, LFUCG budget changes, police reform, arts funding, street trees, and more. We know that our work is working.

Our entire staff is incredibly proud of everything contained inside this Annual Report. It was a challenging and complex year for us, but the body of work that we put out in 2021 is powerful. We're excited to share this with you, and in 2022, we're excited to find new ways to get more people engaged with their local government.

+ Richard Young - Executive Director, CivicLex



Milestones in 2021

JAN.



Civic Artist in Residence

Applications for Lexington's first ever Civic Artist in Residence program opened. Over 50 Fayette County artists applied.

FEB.



Civic Education: Redistricting

We launched our Redistricting program in advance of the 2021 Redistricting process. 1,750 people participated across the course of the year.

MAY



Public Input Research

We launched our Public Input process with LFUCG, which surveyed over 1,000 residents about public input on the legislative process.

JUN.



Our work was featured by the National Academy of Public Administration on a panel about Public Governance and Engagement.

SEP.



We hired our third full-time employee, Katherine Anderson, as our Evaluation Manager.

OCT.

WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION

We received a grant from the Walton Family Foundation for our K-12 civic education work.



MAR.



We were a featured speaker for the Library of Congress at their *Using Civic Media to Build a Better Society* event.

APR.



Civic Education: LFUCG Budget

We released our guide to LFUCG's Annual Budget. We reached 2,891 Lexington residents through our work for the FY21/22 Budget.

JUL.



Civic Artists-in-Residence Anthony Gilmore, Debra Faulk, and Hannah Allen began their residency inside LFUCG.

AUG.



Civic Education: ARPA

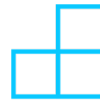
We hosted our first workshop focused on the American Rescue Plan Act. 1,379 residents used our ARPA resources & participated in our programming in 2021.

NOV.



We presented with the Lexington Herald-Leader, the Associated Press, and the Conversation at the Lenfest Institute's News Philanthropy Summit.

DEC.



Institute for Nonprofit News

We participated in the Institute for Nonprofit News' NewsMatch for the first time.





Civic Education

The core of CivicLex’s work.

In 2021, our civic education work broadened and deepened. Throughout the year, we covered some of the most important issues we’ve seen come through Lexington in years – local redistricting, the American Rescue Plan Act, and more.

We made our first foray into the K12 system in the summer through a partnership with Fayette County Public Schools’ Summer Ignite series. We enjoyed spending time with students at Veteran’s Park Elementary and Henry Clay High School talking about the importance of civic involvement. We’re excited to build on this with a more formal FCPS partnership in 2022.

We built an exciting new partnership with the University of Kentucky’s Center for Service Learning & Civic Engagement in the fall. We hosted weekly watch & learn parties of city council committee meetings with students. We’ll be bringing back this program in 2022.

We’re excited to share the growth of CivicLex’s civic education work with you throughout the rest of this Annual Report.

46,161

Moments of civic education* occurred from residents accessing the CivicLex Weekly

9,104

Civic actions* taken as a result of the CivicLex Weekly

300%

Increase in web traffic on our Civic Education content from 2020



* Moments of civic education are defined as instances in which direct civic education occurred via in-email issue coverage or opening of external links to educational material. Civic action includes contacting council members or city staff directly from emails, adding of city meetings to external calendars, opening of city meeting agendas or summaries, and more.





The CivicLex Weekly

The best way to stay engaged.

2021 was a big year for the CivicLex Weekly, an integral pillar of our work!

We published 48 editions of the CivicLex Weekly in 2021, keeping thousands of Lexingtonians informed about what is happening in city government. The CivicLex Weekly provides readers with four concise, clear topics each week: a big idea to think about, a vital city government meeting to follow, one way to get involved in civic life, and a follow-up on the previous week's news.

In 2021, we covered a variety of topics, including:

Who is running for office in 2022 • ARPA Funding • LFUCG Property Sales • Accessory Dwelling Units • Lexington's Redistricting Commission • Police Collective Bargaining Agreement • Transportation Changes to Nicholasville Road • LFUCG's Annual Budget • Lexington's New Council • Small Business Stimulus Programs • The Fayette County Mental Health Court • Energy & Environment Programs • a New City Department Focused on Housing • the Sustainable Growth Task Force • How Legislation Advances through Council • FCPS Funding • COVID-19 Rental Assistance • the Mayor's Commission for Racial Justice and Equality • Snow Removal Updates • Lexington's EPA Consent Decree • LFUCG & UKs Coldstream Land Swap Agreement

48

Issues of the CivicLex Weekly published in 2021

35%

Increase in CivicLex Weekly subscribers in 2021.

32,798

Number of times the CivicLex Weekly was read in 2021.

"The best way to keep on top of local civic and government issues in Lexington is the CivicLex Weekly update. This is so well done."

- Tom Eblen, former Managing Editor & Columnist, Lexington Herald-Leader





Civic Education: Redistricting

Keeping the public informed about a complex process.

This year, the stars aligned for us to have the opportunity to address an important process that only happens once every 10 years - Local Redistricting!

We hired Gabrielle Mason, a third-year Law Student at UK, to serve as our Redistricting Fellow in the spring. With her help, we launched a 10-part newsletter that explained the process of local redistricting and kept residents informed.

In addition to the newsletter, we hosted over 20 events related to local council redistricting, including workshops covering how each of Lexington's 12 districts has changed over the past 50 years. We also hosted 12 reading club meetings covering essential reading about local redistricting best practices.

But our favorite events were Redistricting Bingo and Paint and Sip. We hosted several Redistricting Bingo nights (including some at the University of Kentucky) to help attendees understand the most important facts about LFUCG's redistricting. Our Paint and Sip events put residents in the driver's seat in the redistricting process, letting them do the math to draw their own districts.

These fun approaches to learning about local civics are critical to the CivicLex formula.

27

Redistricting events throughout 2021

1,750+

Fayette County residents used our Redistricting Resources



“CivicLex offers Lexingtonians an incredible tool we haven't had before – an accessible and easy to understand look into all the decisions our local government makes on a regular basis.”

– Brittany Roethemeier, Executive Director, Fayette Alliance





Civic Education: ARPA

Helping make sense of a once in a lifetime opportunity.

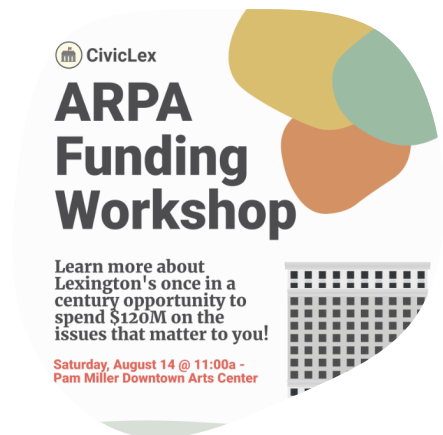
In 2021, the Federal Government passed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), delivering millions of dollars in COVID relief to communities across the country.

When Lexington heard that it would receive over \$120M in ARPA funds, we knew that we needed to make a hard pivot to cover the process and use of these funds and advocate for more resident engagement. We contacted the city and advocated for a participatory budgeting process for ARPA funds. While that didn't happen, the Council did initiate a public input process to decide how to allocate funding.

Once the process started, CivicLex attended all of the ARPA subgroup meetings, created a publicly-accessible online database of the notes from the meetings, and created a hub for updates on the process. We would often see notes from our database and hub passed around by council members in meetings.

We also hosted several ARPA workshops - some in partnership with Council Members - to help the public imagine uses for the funds, know how to best advocate for their priorities, and understand the process.

Council will make its final decisions about ARPA funding in 2022.



“The wide variety of local government affairs and actions can be challenging to keep track of, even for those intimately involved; luckily CivicLex has stepped in to untangle the complex web of information and make it easy for the public to follow.”

- Chris Woodall, Director of Long-Range Planning, LFUCG





Civic Education: LFUCG Budget

Helping the public grasp one of the city's most important documents.

Budgets are literally an expression of a city's values. 2022 will be our fifth year of publishing a guide to the Mayor's proposed and adopted budgets. In 2019, the city started publishing a Public Annual Financial Report (PAFR), also designed to help the public understand the city's finances and budget.

Our approach to explaining the budget is slightly different from the city's approach in the PAFR. Instead of focusing on spending by department and division, we reorganize the city's budget into an easy-to-understand framework of twelve sectors (think agriculture & food, public health, public safety, transportation, etc.). We think this makes it easier to understand what types of issues we "value" with investment and what we don't.

This year, we updated the document's design and created a searchable database of how funding is allocated - a first in the city of Lexington. We also included explainers on what was different about this year's budget - including COVID aid and ARPA funds.

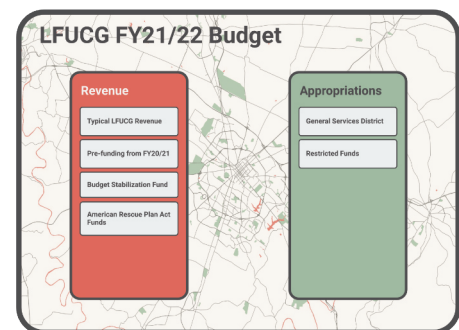
As in previous years, we also hosted several workshops on the city budget, helping residents understand the difficulty of making hard choices about spending our city's limited resources.

629

Residents participated in our Budget programming

2,899

Residents were reached by our educational resources about the Budget



Excerpt from the 2021 CivicLex Budget Guide

"CivicLex's accessible summaries of city council goings on allowed my community group to successfully advocate for several policies that impact the daily lives and the wellbeing of people of color in our city."

- Emma Anderson, Community Activist





Public Input Research

Changing how public input works.

In 2021, we launched a new program in partnership with LFUCG, UK's Martin School for Public Policy, and Transylvania University to research, survey, and improve how residents provide input during the legislative process in Lexington.

We started by launching a public survey to gather input from the broader community on the legislative process, and we received responses from over 1,000 Lexington residents.

The survey told us that the public doesn't engage with the city because they don't understand what issues they can weigh in on (45%) and don't know how to participate (41%). We also learned that the public wants engagement opportunities outside of City Council meetings and wants a better way to follow issues throughout the legislative process.

The next phase of the process, to be completed in early 2022, will be to survey city employees about where in the legislative process specifically they want resident input. To start this process, we created the first-ever complete flowchart of the legislative process at LFUCG, displayed below.

In Spring 2022, after we have these two sets of information, we'll be able to generate a series of recommendations for improving residents' engagement in the legislative process.

1,032

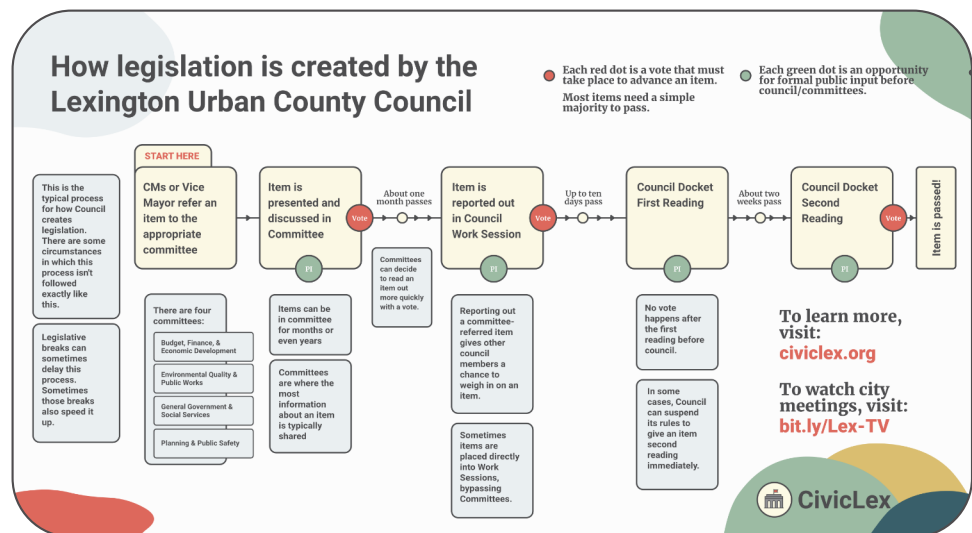
Respondents to our Public Input Survey

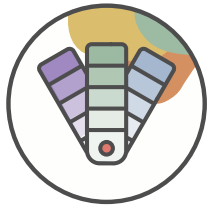
73%

Of Lexingtonians would like to be **more engaged** in local government

17%

Of respondents understand their options for engaging with local government **well or very well**





Civic Artist in Residence

Creative approaches to government.

In 2021, CivicLex and LFUCG welcomed Anthony Gilmore, Debra Faulk, and Hannah Allen as our inaugural Civic Artists in Residence. A team of LFUCG workers, artists, and community members selected these three artists to bring their creative practice and perspective directly into an LFUCG department through a competitive application process at the beginning of the year. They'll be in residence for one year, concluding in July of 2022.

In Environmental Quality and Public Works, Tony Gilmore, a filmmaker and writer, spent much of the first half of his residency on ride alongs with sanitation workers, spending time at the recycling center, and learning about how LFUCG cares for the environment. In 2022, he'll use his experience in the department and interviews with LFUCG workers to create a board game to help Lexington residents understand how the department works and the everyday challenges they face.

In Finance, Hannah Allen, a quilter, spent the first half of her residency learning about city finances, budgeting, and all of the programs that LFUCG funds with tax dollars. In 2022, she'll be crafting 7 quilts that explain how the city spends tax dollars using materials relevant to the expenditure and hosting workshops for LFUCG staff and the community.

In Social Services, Debra Faulk, a stand-up comedian, spent the first half of her residency engaging with the Family Care Center's staff and clients and hosting improv workshops across the city. In 2022, she'll host improv workshops designed to help LFUCG employees and residents express their feelings, communicate better, and uncover solutions to challenges in city government.

1,170

Artist hours spent learning from LFUCG employees

Artistic & Community Advisors:

Jason Akhtarekhavari, Jessica Breen, Raaziq El-Amin, Kurt Gohde, Chester Grundy, Brandy Shumake, Lakshmi Sriraman, DeBraun Thomas, & Kremena Todorova

City of Lexington Advisors:

Nancy Albright, Rob Allen, Amber Luallen, Erin Hensley, Alice Hilton, Elizabeth McGee, Angela Poe, Joanna Rodes, Ashley Simpson, & Deborah Slone

Project Team:

Kit Anderson, Megan Gulla, Ashley Hanson, Mark Kidd, Heather Lyons, & Richard Young





Hannah Allen, Debra Faulk, & Tony Gilmore (left to right)



Workers at LFUCG Recycling Center



Tony Gilmore and Rob Allen, Director of Streets & Roads



Debra Faulk leading an improv workshop at the Bell House

Hannah Allen's quilt representing waste service fees using discarded plastic bags.



Tony Gilmore crafting his board game.

Third Thursday at Family Care Center





Our Voices Project

Lifting up lived experience.

In 2021, we concluded the Our Voices Project, a community forum and partnership with the Lexington Herald-Leader, Key NewsJournal, and RadioLex. Our Voices was designed to give a platform to Black and Brown Lexingtonians to share their experiences with ways in which systemic racism impacts Lexington's most pressing civic issues.

We co-published five rounds of 5-8 writers throughout the project, who were recruited using an open application process. In addition to compensation, Our Voices writers received direct, one-on-one mentorship and coaching with Peter Baniak and Linda Blackford, Executive Editor and editorial writer of the Lexington Herald-Leader, Patrice Muhammad, founder of Key NewsJournal, and Victor Palomino, Director of El Pulso.

Looking forward, we are continuing this partnership through a joint civic journalism fund with the Herald-Leader, which we will use to develop more projects that amplify marginalized voices and increase civic health in Lexington-Fayette County.

\$250

Paid per piece to writers, in addition to receiving direct coaching with editors of the Herald-Leader

26

Opinion pieces published

61,000

Number of times Our Voices pieces were read

"It was great to be able to have the opportunity to articulate something I've had to say for a long time and have those words reach a large audience."

- Our Voices Writer



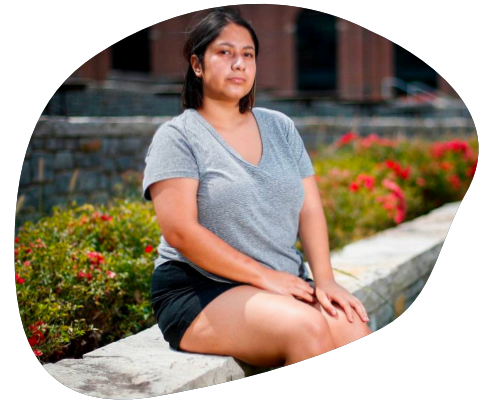


“Being introduced to health equity as I entered adulthood changed the way I processed my healthcare experiences, but knowledge didn’t exempt me from subpar treatment based on my race and gender”

- Ariel Arthur, Our Voices Writer

“Growing up in the U.S. as an undocumented child meant that calling the police was never a choice for when I needed emergency assistance”

- Edith Cruz, Our Voices Writer



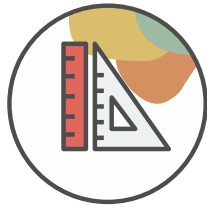
“It has not been lost on me that the only Black man I personally knew to receive an opportunity in a school was brought on in a punitive role.”

- Russell Allen, Our Voices Writer

“Progress, not to be confused with prosperity, has little sympathy for the elderly black Vet with glaucoma and bedbugs who cannot make his mortgage payments.”

- Jaria Gordon, Our Voices Writer





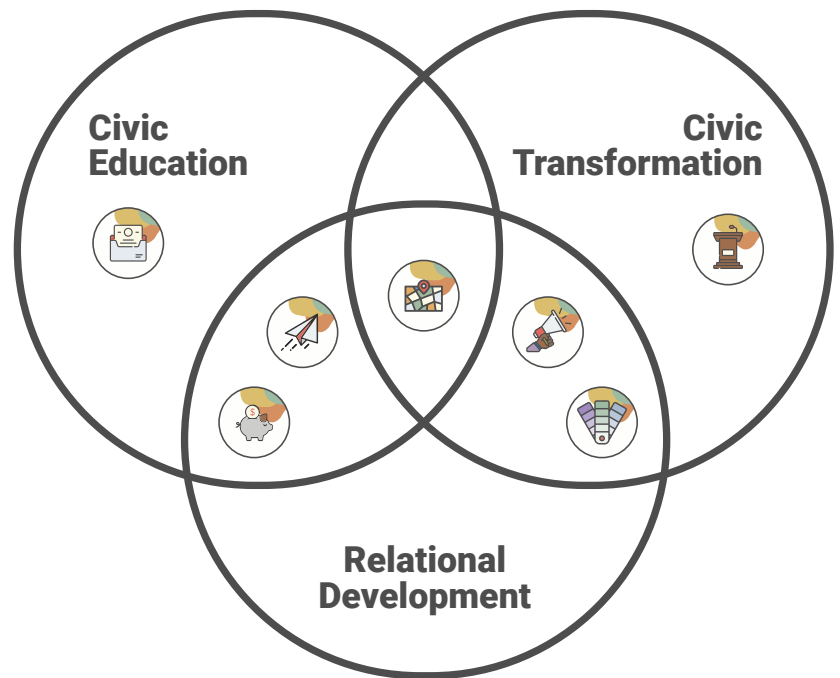
Evaluation

Measuring our impact.

In 2021, CivicLex hired our third full-time team member, Kit Anderson, as our Evaluation Manager, thanks to support from the Greater Clark Foundation. Kit's role is to create clear frameworks for evaluating if our work is successful, measure how we perform on those frameworks, and develop strategies to help other communities understand how CivicLex operates.

One of our most significant evaluation breakthroughs in 2021 was the creation of our Strengthening Civic Health Framework (pictured below). This is a new way of understanding CivicLex's work through three overlapping categories:

- 1. Civic Education** to help residents understand local civic issues and equipping them with knowledge and tools to meaningfully engage with those issues.
- 2. Civic Transformation** that works with local civic institutions to build more accessible processes that enable broader resident engagement and democratic participation.
- 3. Relational Development** that gives residents and power-holders shared governance over our work, connecting Lexingtonians across power levels in public workshops, and building facilitation techniques that decentralize formal experience.



 **The CivicLex Weekly**

 **Civic Education: Redistricting**

 **Our Voices Project**

 **Civic Artist in Residence**

 **Civic Education: LFUCG Budget**

 **Public Input Research**

 **Civic Education**



The **Strengthening Civic Health** framework is great for looking at the impact of our work, but we also want to consider the values behind it. This is where the **Aesthetic Perspectives**, an evaluation framework developed by **Animating Democracy** comes in.

The **Aesthetic Perspectives** framework was designed to help evaluate creative work at the intersection of arts, civic engagement, community development, and justice. It outlines 11 core attributes of this work. The five that are particularly relevant to CivicLex are listed below. Each attribute contains guiding questions that help analyze the impact of our work with qualitative and quantitative data.



Communal Meaning
Does the work facilitate collective meaning that transcends individual perspective and experience?



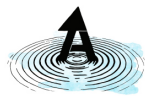
Cultural Integrity.
Does the work demonstrates integrity and ethical use of material with specific cultural origins and context?



Disruption
Does the work expose what has been hidden, pose new ways of being, or model new forms of action?



Openness.
Does the work deepen impact by remaining open, fluid, transparent, subject to influence, and able to hold contradiction?



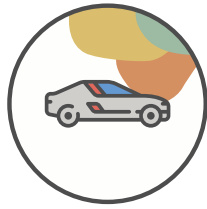
Stickiness
Does the work achieve sustained resonance, impact, or value?

In 2021, these frameworks informed the evaluation of our core programming, including the CivicLex Weekly, our civic education workshops, and municipal budget coverage.

With this information and even more evaluation, we are developing the tools and resources other communities can use to help build their own civic health organizations.

First, a **Theory of Practice** document will explain the reasoning and theory behind our work and how we evaluate our success. Then, the **Governance Handbook** will explain our organization's governance structure and logistics, and the **Programmatic Handbook** will outline we create and implement programs.





What's next for CivicLex?

Ottlex

In April of 2022, we're relaunching On the Table, a city-wide, distributed conversation to imagine the future of Lexington. Data from OTT will underpin the 2023 Comprehensive Plan.



Civic Education: K12

In spring of 2022, we'll launch a partnership with Fayette County Public Schools, working with a cohort of high school teachers to build new approaches to teaching local civics.



Civic Education

We're expanding our civic education and news coverage with a new staff member, Gillian Stawiszynski, who will cover almost all city hall meetings and take over the CivicLex Weekly.



Civic Artist in Residence

The public phase of our Civic Artist in Residence program will start with events hosted by our civic artists to help the public learn about their divisions and departments.



Public Input Research

We'll finish our research and release our recommendations for how LFUCG can better engage residents in the process of creating legislation.



Elections 2022

We'll launch our coverage of the 2022 election, which will include CivicLex's first organizational candidate questionnaire, a revamped LexVote website, and a Council at Large debate.



Bluegrass Civic Journalism Fund

We'll build on the partnership we started with the Herald-Leader through Our Voices to find news ways of supporting the civic media ecosystem in Central Kentucky.



Consulting

We'll be launching a new part of CivicLex focused entirely on earned revenue by working with outside agencies on community engagement needs. We're excited to get started!





Financial Overview

\$344,449

Total revenue raised in 2021 for CivicLex projects

\$191,388

Total 2021 operating expenses

\$38,618

Reserved for 2022 Civic Artist in Residence Expenses

\$169,505

Personnel & Programming cost in 2021

\$15,000

Reserved for 2022 K12 Civic Education Expenses

\$21,883

Operational costs in 2021

\$99,443

Net 2021 Revenue (Unencumbered)

\$221,388

Total assets as of 01/01/2022

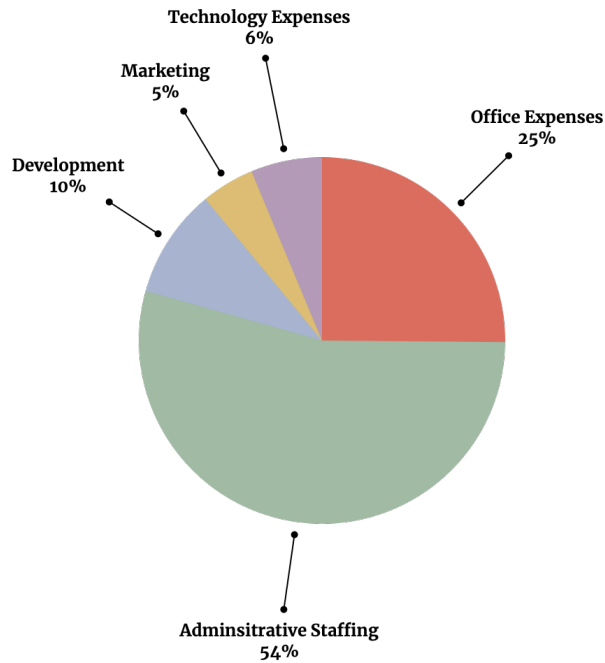
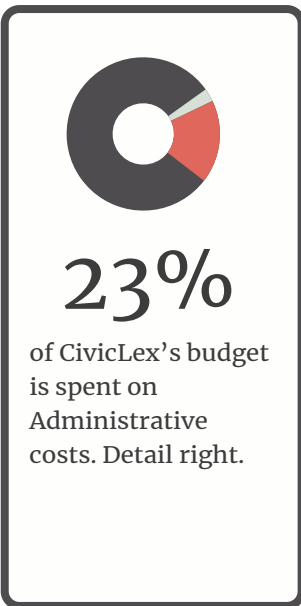
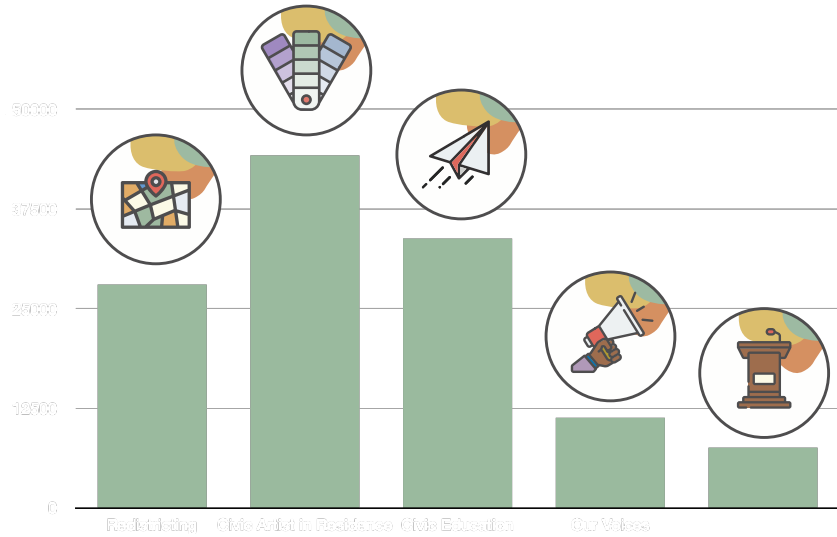
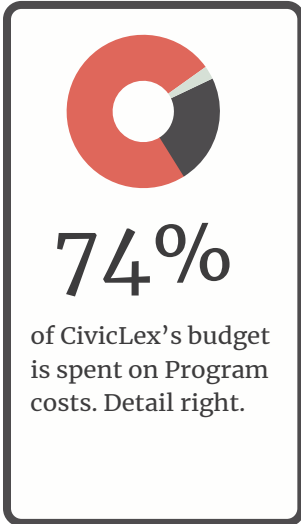
"Commerce Lexington recognizes the importance of providing timely, accurate, and valuable information to our members and the regional business community at-large about policy issues. CivicLex has become a key connection between Fayette County residents and what's going on at City Hall. Engagement is critical on issues that are important to our future, and we appreciate the work CivicLex does to keep us informed, get people involved, and ultimately build a better community."

- Bob Quick, CEO of Commerce Lexington





Expenses



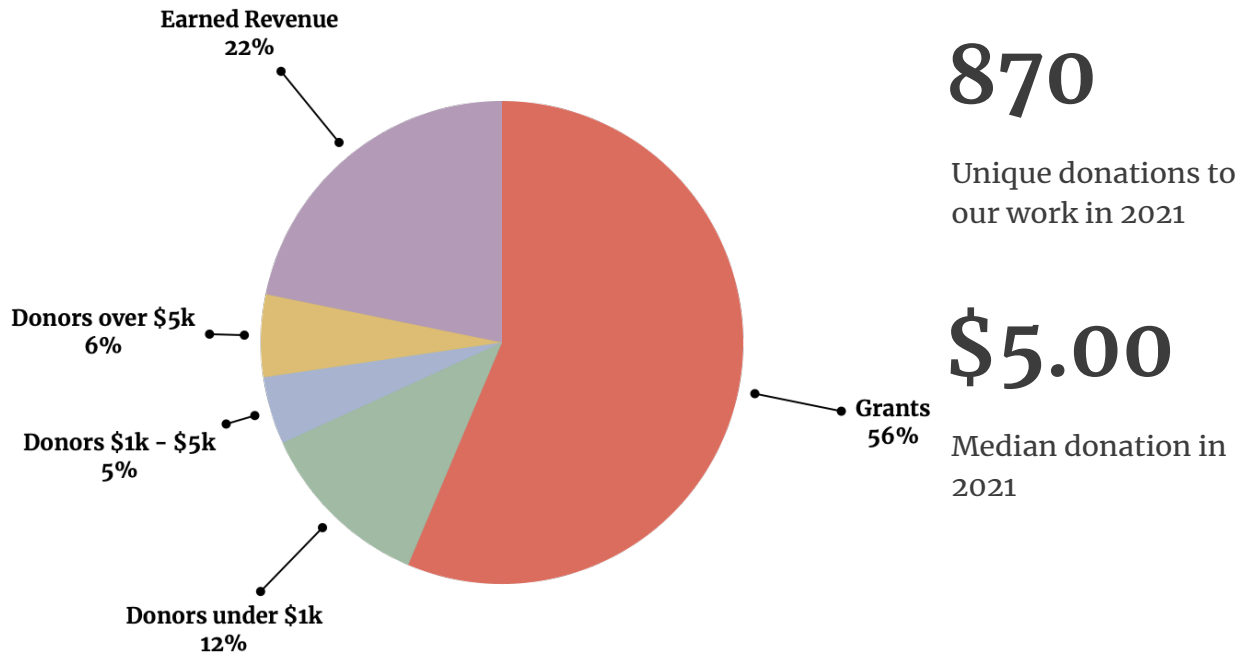
“CivicLex engages people who ordinarily are not involved in making decisions in Lexington, Kentucky, and it provides information that under normal circumstances is not readily available to the public.”

- Walt Gaffield, President, Fayette County Neighborhood Council





Revenue & Donors



Grantors



Donors over \$250

Dan Rowland, Nancy Barron & Associates, Jedra Charitable Foundation, Arthur Shechet, Scott Shapiro, Melody Flowers, Christine Huskisson, Mark Davis, Marilyn Robie, Carolyn Bratt, Jennifer Lai-Peterson, Susan Scollay, Alysa Vilelli, Ricki Rosenberg, Josh Douglas, Allison Lankford, Ben Self, Eileen Burk, Graham Pohl, Devon Pohl, Ronald Vissing, Haviland Argo, Michelle Young, Anthony Elson, Deborah Alexander, Anonymous



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“There’s something brilliant in what CivicLex is doing because they’re foregrounding the importance of relationships.

Imagine if we could make it a basic principle that as we rebuild local journalism and information resources, we connect that to a project of relationship building on that scale.”

Danielle Allen, Director of the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University about CivicLex on WBUR’s “On Point”

