# Blind & Low Vision NZ, formerly Blind Foundation, Community Impact Report 2020

Produced 2020 by Accessible Formats Service, Blind & Low Vision NZ, Auckland, New Zealand.

# Transcriber's Notes

Images have been omitted in this e-text edition. Where captions are present they have been retained.

If reading this volume on a portable braille device note that this etext is unproofed by touch.

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# Creating our Future

**We empower New Zealanders who are blind, deafblind or have low vision to live the life they choose.**

We all want independence to make choices in our lives and do the things we choose. Although people who are blind, deafblind or have low vision face challenges, they can—and do—live fulfilling and independent lives. At Blind Low Vision NZ, we support our clients so they can do household tasks, travel safely and independently, enjoy recreational activities, and succeed in the career of their choice.

Our new strategic vision for 2020-2024 is all about empowering clients to live the life they choose.

This means clients decide what emotional and practical support they need, based on what they want to accomplish in their lives.

It also means greater collaboration with local councils and businesses to provide equal opportunity to people who are blind, deafblind or have low vision. We want safe environments, accessible information, and removal of barriers to enable all New Zealanders to be valued, contributing members of society.

**Our new strategic priorities are:**

1. Supporting **independence** with core services and technology

2. **Educate and Equip**, providing clients with ongoing learning opportunities

3. Promoting **social inclusion** in New Zealand

4. Becoming a best practice **for purpose organisation**

Over the past year we've had some notable achievements, such as gaining cross party political support to introduce legislation for an accessible New Zealand. We've also

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started our nationwide rollout of Alexa enabled devices, allowing our clients to use their voice to access our growing library of audio books, search the internet and manage daily tasks in their home.

As a nation, we have also experienced the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. We've been guiding clients on how to keep themselves safe while out and about, as people who are blind, deafblind or have low vision often rely on contacting surfaces to navigate. During the lockdown, our check-in phone calls and library services were particularly important, as over half of our clients were in the high-risk 70+ age group and some live alone.

This year we are celebrating Blind Low Vision NZ's 130th Anniversary. We've come a long way since 1890. We started as a school and residence that, with good intentions, sheltered clients from the outside world. Over time, we evolved into supporting clients to develop their independence.

And now, alongside our wonderful staff, fundraisers, donors, and volunteers, we are working towards empowering our clients to live the life they choose.

**Me mahi tahi tātau hei whakapakari te hunga kāpō**

**Work together to give strength to people who are blind or have low vision.**

John Mulka Chief Executive

Rick Hoskin Board Chair

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# Who we help and how

Our dedicated staff and volunteers help people from Cape Reinga to Bluff—we have 19 offices, and no location is off-limits.

**Upper North Island** (excl Auckland) 2,887 clients

**Auckland** 3,652 clients

**Lower North Island** (excl Wellington) 2,308 clients

**Wellington** 1,372 clients

**South Island** (excl Christchurch) 2,321 clients

**Christchurch** 1,349 clients

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This year our contact centre staff received **37,407 calls**

And we had **658,237** requests from our library.

We have clients of all ages, though the majority are over 65, due to the correlation of old age and vision loss.

8%: 0-21

12%: 22-44

16%: 45-64

18%: 65-79

46%: 80+

**130 years** Blind Low Vision NZ has been supporting Kiwis whose sight cannot be improved with lenses.

This year we supported **13,889 clients**.

We tailor our **services, events, and activities to cater for different age groups**, needs and interests.

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# A snapshot of blindness, deafblindness and low vision in New Zealand

Some people assume that blindness, deafblindness or low vision is rare and that it could never happen to them or someone they love. But it's more common than you might think.

* 4% of Kiwis are currently living with blindness or low vision.
* Every 2.5 hours, someone in NZ develops blindness.
* 1 in 5 people will experience blindness or low vision in their lifetime.

And it will be more common in the future because of our ageing population.

* By 2030, the number of Kiwis with blindness, deafblindness or low vision is likely to increase by over 25%.
* The number of Kiwis with age-related macular degeneration is projected to increase by 70%.

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There are also many people in NZ who (sometimes unknowingly) have diseases that may lead to blindness or low vision. These diseases are often treatable if diagnosed in time, which is why raising awareness is an important part of what we do at Blind Low Vision NZ.

* 50% of sight loss is preventable, 25% of sight loss is treatable.
* Cataract surgery has good success rates, but leads to sight loss in 5% of cases.
* An estimated 2% of Kiwis over 40 have glaucoma. Half of them are unaware of this.
* Over 70% of Kiwis aged 40-49 do not have a regular eye examination.

With the right training, assistive technology, and mindset, most people with blindness or low vision can live the life they choose.

* 74% of Blind Low Vision NZ clients live in their own homes, either alone or with a partner and/or children.
* 57% of working age people who are blind or have low vision are currently in work compared to 77% of the NZ working age population.

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# Renzo's story

They say it takes a village to raise a child. For five-year-old Renzo, who has been blind since birth, his "village" is giving him the best start in life.

His superstar mum Nicole is as positive as they get. Her attitude has helped Renzo develop resilience, confidence, and a great sense of humour. His supportive grandparents live close by, allowing Nicole to work full time. And Jo, a Blind Low Vision NZ independent life skills coach, visits every week.

Jo assists Renzo with his day­to-day skills and teaches him how to use a white cane. She also advises Nicole on how to support his needs. Nicole says, "Jo genuinely loves my child you know, it's not just a job for her … she's a part of our family now".

When Nicole found out Renzo couldn't see, her main concern was that he might struggle to make friends as he got older. She knew having a group of friends looking out for him would encourage his

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independence. Nicole also worried about Renzo as a young adult: "When he's at that age to move out of home, how will he cope without me?"

Blind Low Vision NZ helped Nicole see that gaining independence is a process, as it is for any child.

For example, Nicole thought Renzo could wait until he was a teenager to learn to use cutlery. We explained that it's in Renzo's best interests to learn these skills as a child and showed her how to encourage him.

Similarly, Nicole can ensure Renzo is at the same level of learning as other children his age by playing Blind Low Vision NZ audio books on Alexa. Eventually, he'll learn to read using braille.

Renzo has also been working with Blind Low Vision NZ at his kindergarten and new school. Through mapping the area, Renzo can familiarise himself much easier and quicker using his white cane. And the best thing? The other children love Renzo and they keep inviting him to their birthday parties. Nicole now believes, with the help of Blind Low Vision NZ, "he will be fine out in that big world on his own, because he is who he is".

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# Sue's Story

Until her sixties, Sue thrived as an active woman who loved helping others. She ran a busy bed and breakfast with her husband and used to look after elderly people in a rest home. Describing herself as a social butterfly, Sue engaged with a wide circle of friends. She also loved tramping up mountains, Scottish dancing, and cooking for her big family. Reading held a special place in her heart.

Over time, a combination of cataracts and a herpes virus attacking her cornea made it hard for Sue to see. Cataract surgery was unsuccessful, and Sue felt devastated. She lost her driving license and struggled to get around while walking. Activities she had always taken for granted now seemed difficult or dangerous.

As someone who enjoyed being helpful, it wasn't easy for Sue to seek help for herself. Sue suffered for six months after her surgery with only her family for support. At that time, our name was still Blind Foundation. As Sue still had some vision, she didn't relate to the word "blind" and wasn't even sure we could assist her. It's because of stories like Sue's that we changed our name to Blind Low Vision NZ.

Sue did, however, contact us when she reached her wit's end. Relief washed over her

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when we listened to her story and arranged a home visit. She described her biggest challenges and the things she needed and wanted to be able to do.

We gave her much-needed emotional support and a range of practical solutions. Together, we developed a plan for Sue to regain her independence in the areas of life that mattered to her.

Now Sue has talking weighing scales in her kitchen and an app that lets her know the temperature of the oven. She reads recipes, books, and newspapers with enlarged text on her iPad. One of our tech specialists showed her how to zoom in and out, and how to categorise apps to make them easy to find.

She is learning to use a white cane and has even tried tandem biking with her husband. Plus, our support groups help her connect with other people with low vision. In Sue's words, "it's been a confidence booster … I'm amazed at the 100% support".

It's taking Sue some time to adjust to her new way of life. She feels reluctant to use her cane in public because she wants people to treat her the same as anyone else. But she loves the idea of having a guide dog one day. She doesn't feel the need to learn braille just yet. But she's keen to snuggle up with her grandchildren and listen to books together using Alexa.

Sue is full of gratitude towards Blind Low Vision NZ "for helping me so much to get my life back together". As she learns new skills and finds ways to keep doing the things she loves, she is reclaiming her sense of self. And she's still Scottish dancing!

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# Our services

## Personalised rehabilitation services

We provide specialised training that gives children and adults who are blind or have low vision the practical skills they need to live safely and independently. This may include learning how to get around independently using a white cane or a guide dog or accomplishing tasks at home. We can also advise on home and kitchen modifications and household organisation.

## Technology

We advise clients about relevant new devices and apps that may transform their lives. Our adaptive technology courses cover topics such as accessible computer functions, word processing, spreadsheets, email, using the internet, reading the news, social networking, shopping, travelling, and accessing books.

## Community & support

We organise social, recreational, and cultural activities to enable people to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle and connect with others. Our support groups, peer mentoring programme and phone peer support service allow clients to talk to others with similar sight loss experiences.

## Employment

Our Employment team helps job-seeking clients to write CVs, apply for jobs and prepare for interviews. For clients who are already working, we organise technology and health and safety assessments, adapt work areas and work together with employers to put solutions in place.

## Library services & accessible formats

We make it possible for people who are blind or have low vision to access books, newspapers, and magazines in the format

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they prefer, whether that's braille, audio, large print or digital. The newest way to access our library is through a "skill" (similar to an app) on a voice-activated Alexa smart speaker. We can also convert personal printed materials into any accessible format.

## Financial support

We have several funds that provide financial assistance to clients who cannot meet the costs of vision rehabilitation, equipment, or tertiary education.

## Specialist services

We provide cultural support for Pacific Island clients, a specialist team for Deafblind clients, and a Parent and Child Enrichment (PACE) programme to help families who have a child with visual impairment.

Box:

"I am very appreciative of the help and support provided. I was feeling very alone with my vision problem until I had help from Blind Low Vision NZ."

**Blind Low Vision NZ Client**

End Box.

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# A small taster of how our work made an impact this year

**5** major political parties now support new legislation to create a fully accessible New Zealand. Blind Low Vision NZ is a driving member of the Access Alliance and we have worked together to achieve this huge milestone.

**10** percent of our clients already have an Alexa-enabled device as part of our nationwide rollout. With Alexa, they can instantly find out the time or the weather, or what's on TV. Or figure out public transport options. Or ask Google that burning question. And while listening to their favourite book, they can pause, change the volume, or skip chapters. All by using their voice.

**1,108** clients have completed 4,212 hours of mobility training this year, gaining the skills and confidence to walk around independently using a white cane. If they want to have a guide dog in the future, our clients need to be able to demonstrate competence using their white cane.

**200,000** listening hours were added to our talking book collection this year. That's nearly 2,000 additional books, including biographies, educational books and all genres of fiction, for all ages.

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Box:

"My client would ask, "How am I going to do my gardens, or change a light bulb or even call if a pipe bursts?" I visited him in his home on several occasions and together we found solutions for his worries and came up with strategies to manage his anxiety."

**Blind Low Vision NZ Counsellor**

End Box.

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# Getting together to support Blind Low Vision NZ

**Blind Low Vision NZ couldn't exist without our family of volunteers. This diverse group of 5,776 dedicated people bring their unique skills to a variety of roles.**

Some like to support clients on daytrips or help them do their shopping. Others provide technology support, library assistance, or help with admin. Creative volunteers make tactile books for children and some read and record the daily news. Puppy socialising is a popular activity. And of course, many people dedicate their time to fundraising. Whichever way people choose to get involved, it's always a lot of fun.

In March, more than 1,900 people grabbed a red bucket and collected money on the streets for our Red Puppy Appeal. Passers-by donated $260,000 towards Blind Low Vision NZ services.

Our cute guide dog puppies often come along to these events.

Blind Low Vision NZ is lucky to have some long-term supporters, such as the students of Ingham House at Howick College. For over 10

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years, they've been organising fundraising events for Blind Low Vision NZ. This year they raised $3,000 for our guide dogs at their International Food Festival.

Photograph: Students of Ingham House at Howick College.

Many of our clients also get involved with fundraising. The amazing Maryanne from Auckland took part in our annual skydive event, where participants sign up to raise $800 and in return get to skydive for free. Maryanne raised $1,846 from her friends, family, and workmates.

Photograph: Maryanne taking part in our annual skydive event

Box:

"The jump and the free-fall were incredible, and I can't wait to do it again. For anyone thinking about ticking it off their bucket list, I say go for it!"

**Maryanne from Auckland**

End Box.

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Box:

"Blind Low Vision NZ called me and said do you want to play cricket? And I said wait, you know what? I'm from Fiji not from India! But from the first day of going blind I admitted to myself that I'm going to try anything you know? Then I got selected and ended up playing for New Zealand in Pakistan in the World Cup."

**—Parveen**

End Box.

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# Blind Low Vision NZ Financials

Three-quarters of the income we receive is from the generous support of New Zealanders. Without donations and gifts in Wills, we would not be able to do our important work.

We would particularly like to acknowledge the thoughtful people who have left money to us in their will. We are always touched when we receive these gifts. We take care to honour the memory of our benefactors by using their gifts in ways that create the most impact and build a sustainable future.

## Where our income comes from

Charitable gifts: 43%

Gifts in Wills: 31%

Property and rental income: 1%

Government: 24%

Other: 1%

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To support our clients to live the life they choose, we align our spending to our four strategic priorities—supporting independence, educate and equip providing ongoing learning opportunities, promoting social inclusion, and becoming a best practice for purpose organisation.

As we consulted with our clients to develop these priorities, we can be sure our income is spent in ways that genuinely benefit them and the things they care about.

And our focus on innovation ensures our services will continue to be relevant into the future.

## Where our money goes

Personalised rehabilitation & support services: 50%

Governance: 1%

Grants to client peer support groups: 2%

Innovation and adaptation for client services: 15%

Awareness raising and advocacy: 16%

Fundraising: 16%

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# In Gratitude

We are extremely grateful to all our generous supporters.

Your kindness helps empower New Zealanders who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision to live the life they choose.

Thank you so much for the difference you have made. From our Street Collection volunteers and Bikkie Day bakers to our Red Puppy sponsors and wonderful supporters, we could not do it without you.

We would like to say a special thank you to some of our key supporters in financial year 2020.

2degrees

A F W and J M Jones Foundation

Acorn Foundation

Air New Zealand

Air Rescue Services Ltd

Alexander McMillan Trust

Alfonso & Enid Weaver Charitable Foundation

B T Lipanovich and R N Covich Charitable Trust

Beatrice Georgeson Trust

Brian Hurle Charitable Trust

Central Lakes Trust

CERT

Charles Edward Otley Trust

Community Trust South

Dorothy M Cutts

Eastern & Central Community Trust

Elliot Estate

Elsie Steele Trust Board

Emeric Erdei Trust

Emma Jane Price Charitable Trust

Eric and Beverly Wright

Frances Skeet Charitable Trust

Glyn Evans Charitable Trust

Grassroots Trust

Grumitt Sisters Charitable Trust

Hilda Bottomley Charitable Trust

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Hudson Gavin Martin

Hugh Green Foundation

Hyundai New Zealand

ILT Foundation

In Memory of Paul Kibblewhite

Internet NZ

Ivy Mearle Shaw Trust

J A Macpherson Charitable Trust

J B W McKenzie Charitable Trust

J G McMahon Charitable Trust

Jack Jeffs Charitable Trust

John Beresford Swan Dudding Trust

Joyce Stanley Trust

Julia Choyce Memorial Charitable Trust

Julie Dickey

Kelliher Charitable Trust

Kingston Sedgfield (NZ) Charitable Trust

Lake Memorial

Lindsay Foundation

Liz Marriott

Lottery Grants Board

M A Tonkinson Charitable Trust

Mac & Tui Chapman Charitable Trust

Maureen Mayne

Maurice Paykel Charitable Trust

Michael Jull Trust

Milestone Foundation

Milford Asset Management

Nancy Caiger Charitable Trust

Nelson Pine Industries

New Plymouth District Council

New World St Martins

New Zealand Community Trust

Nikau Foundation

One Foundation

Oxford Sports

P H Vickery Charitable Trust

Pamela Maling Memorial Trust

Pelorus Trust

Percy Wheatley Trust

Perpetual Guardian

Phil and Siobhan Logan

Public Trust

Rata Foundation

Ray Watts Charitable Trust

Reed Charitable Trust

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Room-Simmonds Charitable Trust

Ross Lund of Timaru Construction

Royal Canin

S M O'Connor

Schutz Estate

Sir George Elliot Charitable Trust

Taumarunui Opportunity Shop

Tennyson Charitable Trust

The Dr Marjorie Barclay Trust

The J R McKenzie Trust

The Lion Foundation

The Owen and John Whitfield Charitable Trust

The Ruth Petty Trust

The Southern Trust

The Trusts Community Foundation

Trust Waikato

Trustees Executors

W A & E M Anderson Memorial Trust

Warner Bros

William David Hicks Farm Trust

Z & R Castle Memorial Trust

Zoetis New Zealand Ltd

## Gifts in Wills

Gifts in Wills support 1 in 3 services at Blind Low Vision NZ. A gift in a Will of as little as 1% makes a tremendous difference. Last year, many of our services would not have been possible without the kind support of the following people who left a gift in their Will.

Estate of A D Harvey

Estate of A E Handforth

Estate of A H Wearing

Estate of Alexander Williamson

Estate of Alfred Higgins

Estate of Alison Eleanor Prendergast

Estate of Alison Herbert Hanham

Estate of Anne Lee

Estate of Anne Rennie

Estate of Anne Ross

Estate of Annie Henwood Fenton

Estate of Arthur Henry Wall

Estate of Barbara Dawn

Estate of Barry & Joan Kibble

Estate of Barry Douglas Logan

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Estate of Barry Robert Baker

Estate of Bernard St George Lawrence

Estate of Betty Belcher

Estate of Beverley Maureen Herring

Estate of C Fowler

Estate of C L Fox

Estate of Christine Margaret Woolford

Estate of Colin Eric Dash

Estate of Daisy Greenaway

Estate of David James Merryweather

Estate of David Lee

Estate of David William Peter Mitchell

Estate of Diane McDonald

Estate of Dorothy Ashbolt

Estate of Douglas Archie Tooth

Estate of Douglas James Althoff

Estate of E A Bonner

Estate of E J Bimpson

Estate of E J Penfold

Estate of E T J Griggs

Estate of Edna Jessie Adie

Estate of Edward C Britton

Estate of Elizabeth Anne Brewster

Estate of Elizabeth Stevenson

Estate of Ellen Lindsay Bradley

Estate of Elva Rose Colgan

Estate of Errol Kaye Maxted

Estate of Evelyn Joyce Fawkes

Estate of Father Brian Dogherty

Estate of FJ Peters

Estate of Florence Quintin Davies

Estate of G C Rowles

Estate of G R Nickle

Estate of Genevieve N Geraghty

Estate of Gillian Campbell McLaren

Estate of Gladys Florence Day

Estate of Glendale Station

Estate of Grant Ean Stewart

Estate of Harry Shuttleworth

Estate of Hazel Mary Inwood

Estate of Henry George Sparks

Estate of Hilda Elizabeth Reid

Estate of Isabelle Benjamin

Estate of J E Bennett

Estate of Jean Shuttleworth

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Estate of Jean Una Benson

Estate of Jean-Clare Harper

Estate of Jeanette MacFarlane Frost

Estate of Joan Robertson

Estate of John Anthony Butler

Estate of John Charles Selby

Estate of John Edward Millar

Estate of John George Hutt

Estate of John Richard Joseph Malcolm

Estate of John Wallace Stiven

Estate of John William Stevenson

Estate of Judith Isobel Turner

Estate of Judith Margaret Todd

Estate of Juliet Myna Holdaway

Estate of Keith Oakley

Estate of Krystyna Danuta Downey

Estate of L J Turner

Estate of Leonard Harley Stokes

Estate of Lesley Doralyn Lilley

Estate of Leslie Ivan McGreevy

Estate of Leslie John Catto

Estate of Margaret Alberta McCracken

Estate of Margaret Atholl Knowles

Estate of Margaret Isobel Macgregor

Estate of Margaret Lillian Waller

Estate of Margaret Sommerville Sinclair

Estate of Mario Marjorie Dingle

Estate of Marjory Grace Campbell

Estate of Martin Wayne Taylor

Estate of Mary Agnes Watkin

Estate of Maurice Terence Smith

Estate of Melva Norma Dixon

Estate of Mollie Nola Richmond

Estate of Mr Kenneth Alexander Roberts

Estate of Mr Stanley V. Ratley

Estate of N D R Price

Estate of Nancy Lucy Gibbons

Estate of Nola Dorothy Strange

Estate of Olive Alison Miller

Estate of Olwyn Purvis

Estate of Patricia Jean Rhodes

Estate of Patricia Joan Duncan

Estate of Patricia Joy Edbrooke

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Estate of Patricia Merlynne Hogan

Estate of R Fowler

Estate of Raynor Elizabeth Stevens

Estate of Rita Merle Diggs

Estate of Robert Bernard Malone

Estate of Robyn Heather Finlayson

Estate of Rodney Maurice Foster

Estate of Romaine Horn

Estate of Ronald James Payne

Estate of Ronald Stuart Couper

Estate of Rosalind Olga Seiler

Estate of Rose Antony

Estate of Roy Desmond Lake

Estate of S M Hart

Estate of Stanley Eric Randerson

Estate of Stewart Mitchell

Estate of Sue Pratley

Estate of Theresa Hall

Estate of Una Perry

Estate of V M McGregor

Estate of Valerie Maud Weatherburn

Estate of Valmai Helson

Estate of Vernon Roach Scull

Estate of Veronica Bernice Senior

Estate of William Ernest Cooke

Estate of William John Chambers

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# The gift of a life without limits

One in three of our services are funded by generous individuals who leave a gift in their Will to Blind Low Vision NZ.

A gift in your Will of as little as 1% can make a lasting difference to Kiwis living with vision loss.

**Please contact Supporter Care on 0800 366 283 or blindlowvision.org.nz to receive an information pack today.**

Blind Low Vision NZ

Formerly Blind Foundation

End of Community Impact Report 2020