



**Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State**  
**Minnesota Public Benefit Corporation / Annual Benefit Report**  
*Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 304A*



Read the instructions before completing this form  
 Must be filed by March 31  
 Filing Fee: \$55 for expedited service in-person, \$35 if submitted by mail

The Annual Benefit Report covers the 12 month period ending on December 31 of the previous year.  
 Notice: Failure to file this form by March 31 of this year will result in the revocation of the corporation's public benefit status without further notice from the Secretary of State, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section 304A.301

1. Corporate Name: (Required) The Improve Group, SBC

2. The public benefit corporation's board of directors has reviewed and approved this report.

3. In the field below, enter the information required by section 304A.301 subd. 2 or 3 for the period covered by this report, (see instructions for further information): Note: Use additional sheets if needed. (Required)

Our benefit report with the required information can be found on the following pages.

4. I, the undersigned, certify that I am the chief executive officer of this public benefit corporation. I further certify that I have signed this document no more than 30 days before the document is delivered to the secretary of state for filing, and that this document is current when signed. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath.

Leah Goldstein Moses  
 Signature of Public Benefit Corporation's Chief Executive Officer

March 31, 2021  
 Date (Must be dated within 30 days before the report is delivered to the Secretary of State for Filing)

**Email Address for Official Notices**

Enter an email address to which the Secretary of State can forward official notices required by law and other notices:

leah@theimprovetgroup.com

Check here to have your email address excluded from requests for bulk data, to the extent allowed by Minnesota law.

List a name and daytime phone number of a person who can be contacted about this form:

<u>Leah Goldstein Moses</u>	<u>651-315-8916</u>
Contact Name	Phone Number

Entities that own, lease, or have any financial interest in agricultural land or land capable of being farmed must register with the MN Dept. of Agriculture's Corporate Farm Program.

Does this entity own, lease, or have any financial interest in agricultural land or land capable of being farmed?  
 Yes  No

**The Improve Group**  
**Public Benefit Corporation**  
**2020 Annual Report**

Submitted March 31, 2021

**The Improve Group**

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## ABOUT THE IMPROVE GROUP

The Improve Group (IG) is a woman-owned, full-service evaluation, research, and strategic planning consulting firm based in St. Paul, Minnesota. Leah Goldstein Moses founded IG in 2000 with a vision to improve programs and organizations that impact the world. Over the past two decades, our powerhouse staff has grown to more than 20 people committed to creating a more inclusive, supportive environment in which all people—but particularly those from vulnerable or underserved communities—can flourish.

In 2016, IG became a Public Benefit Corporation to better reflect our organizational commitment to supporting partners in creating and sustaining meaningful change. This report describes how we pursued our public benefit mission in 2020, the public benefit we saw from our clients during the year, the factors that helped our work or got in our way, and our plans for the future.

### What is our public benefit?

IG helps mission-driven organizations make the most of information, navigate complexity, and ensure their investments of time and money lead to meaningful, sustained impact. To think about it another way, communities are better served by their nonprofit, public, and private organizations through our work together.

### What did 2020 mean for us?

IG marked our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, providing a chance to celebrate our connections and develop strategies to serve our organization into the future, even as we grappled with the uncertainty, grief, and hope that defined 2020. Compassion, connection, and equity emerged as the year's central themes.

## HOW DID WE PURSUE OUR PUBLIC BENEFIT IN 2020?

We pursued our public benefit mission through several avenues, including our consulting practice, community and partnership, internal equity and inclusion work, and planning that will guide how we work toward our public benefit in the coming years.

### Consulting practice

We had nearly 30 projects wrap up in 2020. As our consulting practice shifted with the COVID-19 pandemic and the uprising for racial justice, we helped clients be creative and agile; serve their communities better; and navigate uncertainty to make decisions that reflect their communities' needs and preferences. This work involved managing a lot of change for both IG and our clients—in project timelines, methods, and even how we came together. We appreciated how our team, partners, and clients stepped up to the series of challenges and opportunities that 2020 brought.

We partnered with clients to help them flex their creativity and agility. This showed up in a variety of ways, including:

- Helping the Minnesota Department of Education identify what the agency needed to support schools in providing services when moving to virtual learning.
- Shifting to more virtual tools and supports, such as supporting the Anoka County Plan of Safe Care Collaborative to transition into an entirely online workgroup.
- Collaborating with clients to know when work should be put on hold—or approached in new ways. For example, we initially paused work with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) to

engage stakeholders about improvements to the disability services system, eventually resuming the ~~Waiver Reimagine~~ project with virtual engagement events.

We supported clients to serve their communities better:

- Moving to virtual spaces opened up opportunities to engage people who would not have been able to participate in projects in person. For example, we helped the Minnesota Department of Transportation hear from more greater Minnesota residents than the agency otherwise would have—all through online engagement.
- We partnered with clients to do sensitive, thoughtful analysis of whether community members' experiences were pandemic-related or happening regardless. One example is our work conducting the ~~Minnesota Reimagine~~ of people with disabilities. We worked to understand where people's freedoms had been unnecessarily restricted due to the pandemic and how that subsequently affected quality of life.

We also helped clients to navigate complexity and uncertainty to make decisions reflective of their communities' preferences and needs. During the Waiver Reimagine project, we first surveyed the people DHS sought to hear from about their readiness and preferences for engagement—and then adapted the project to meet them.

## Community and partnership

We strive to be a good partner—working together in ways that are open, thoughtful, and collaborative. The year brought many opportunities to collaborate with and learn from experts and partners. We stepped back when other partners stepped forward, and vice versa. For example, when a partner took medical leave, we helped with support and changes to planned work.

We sought to forge stronger connections throughout the year. As we planned our 20th-anniversary celebration, our team agreed that the great joy of our work is the opportunity to make connections with clients, partners, staff, and the community members we serve. In that spirit, we created and carried out "~~Virtual Connections~~" to deepen relationships and tell stories that connect happy memories of the past to our exciting future! And while the pandemic transformed our anniversary plans, it also made celebrating our connections feel more vital than ever.

The connections we made and deepened in 2020 brought joy to our hearts and tears to our eyes. In a year that presented so many challenges and hardships, these connections

We had more than 100 engagements from our community for IG2020 Connections:

- Some clients and partners ~~celebrated~~ and contributed celebratory entries in our ~~Virtual Connections~~.
- Staff ~~shared~~ about IG's past, present, and what excites them about the future.
- Several clients and partners participated in ~~Virtual Connections~~.
- More than 50 members of our community got together for a virtual anniversary party!
- People contributed to ~~Virtual Connections~~ that remind them of their connections with IG.

Clients also shared their unexpected joys in working with IG... "you've unlocked something [among stakeholders] where they're able to share things in a way that they maybe hadn't before. And they are saying 'I want people to hear my story. I want people to be inspired.' "

reinforced the importance of the work that our clients and communities accomplish, and the role IG plays in enhancing those impacts.

We also continued to deepen our community work by more regularly embedding community members with direct decision-making and expertise into our projects. We worked with partners, community liaisons, or subcontractors in 24 percent of the 29 projects that closed in 2020. These partners extended the community, cultural, and diversity depth of our team in 16 percent of those projects.

### Internal equity and inclusion work

We worked to center equity and inclusion in our organization in new ways. We adopted [Diversity audits](#), [Anti-racism training](#), and facilitated listening sessions, making space for co-creation and feedback.

We navigated the turbulent year with compassion, care, and collaboration. This ranged from giving staff space with time off for the George Floyd memorial and the presidential election, to encouraging staff to use dedicated paid time off to volunteer, to being responsive to our team as we adapted to different work locations and needs.

Staff continued to guide much of our work, informing the opportunities that we pursued. Additionally, we were excited to host two students for summer internships with our staff through a partnership with the [Internship](#) program.

## WHAT PUBLIC BENEFITS DID WE SEE?

As we celebrated connections all year, our clients' commitment to engaging their communities and adapting their work to serve community members better energized our team. We took pride in and learned lessons from our connections' successes in deftly navigating the difficulties and opportunities of 2020. Several clients adapted their services, delved into the impacts of the pandemic on their communities, or forged stronger community connections:

- The pandemic caused [End Abuse's](#) teen dating violence prevention grantees to shift focus to meeting the basic needs of the families in their communities. Since then, we have helped End Abuse maintain continuity with evaluation and supported End Abuse's transition to a youth-led program starting in 2021.
- Spurred by concern for the entrepreneurs they fund, [African Economic Development Solutions](#) (AEDS) sought to assess the impact of the pandemic on small businesses owned by African immigrants in the Twin Cities. The organization's survey of small businesses uncovered profound pandemic impacts, which were deepened after the murder of George Floyd. AEDS' work has helped strengthen the organization's case for securing funding and support to meet the needs of these local small businesses to weather the pandemic.
- We have been proud to partner with the [Bush Fellowship](#) on a multi-year evaluation of the impact of the prestigious Bush Fellowship. As we collaboratively worked through the evaluation's findings, our teams identified a trend of Fellow's experiences during times of economic downturn, which provided insights into what current Fellows are going through in this period of economic hardship. Bush used those insights in managing the Fellowship for the current cohort of Fellows.
- We were also excited to see opportunities for community voices to be more present in decision-making. For example, the Olmstead Quality of Life survey explored how the pandemic has affected people with disabilities. We hope these insights will be used to further support policy changes that improve people's quality of life and strengthen their decision-making power.

## WHAT HELPED US OR GOT IN OUR WAY?

The pandemic presented operational challenges for IG similar to those experienced by other organizations. COVID-19, racial injustice and other inequities, and political upheaval took a toll on our team, our clients, and our communities. We were often tired and anxious, but we also felt our place in these larger systems become clearer, and we rededicated ourselves to the positive change we hope to see.

## WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON?

Our entire team engaged in strategic planning starting in 2020. We have identified three strategies that will guide us in the year ahead:

- Deepen, solidify, and expand internal and external equity work.
- Grow relationships, grow our business.
- Propel capacity for learning, reflection, and shared leadership.



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*Steve Simon*

Steve Simon  
Secretary of State