

champions  
of change



2025

# Impact Report

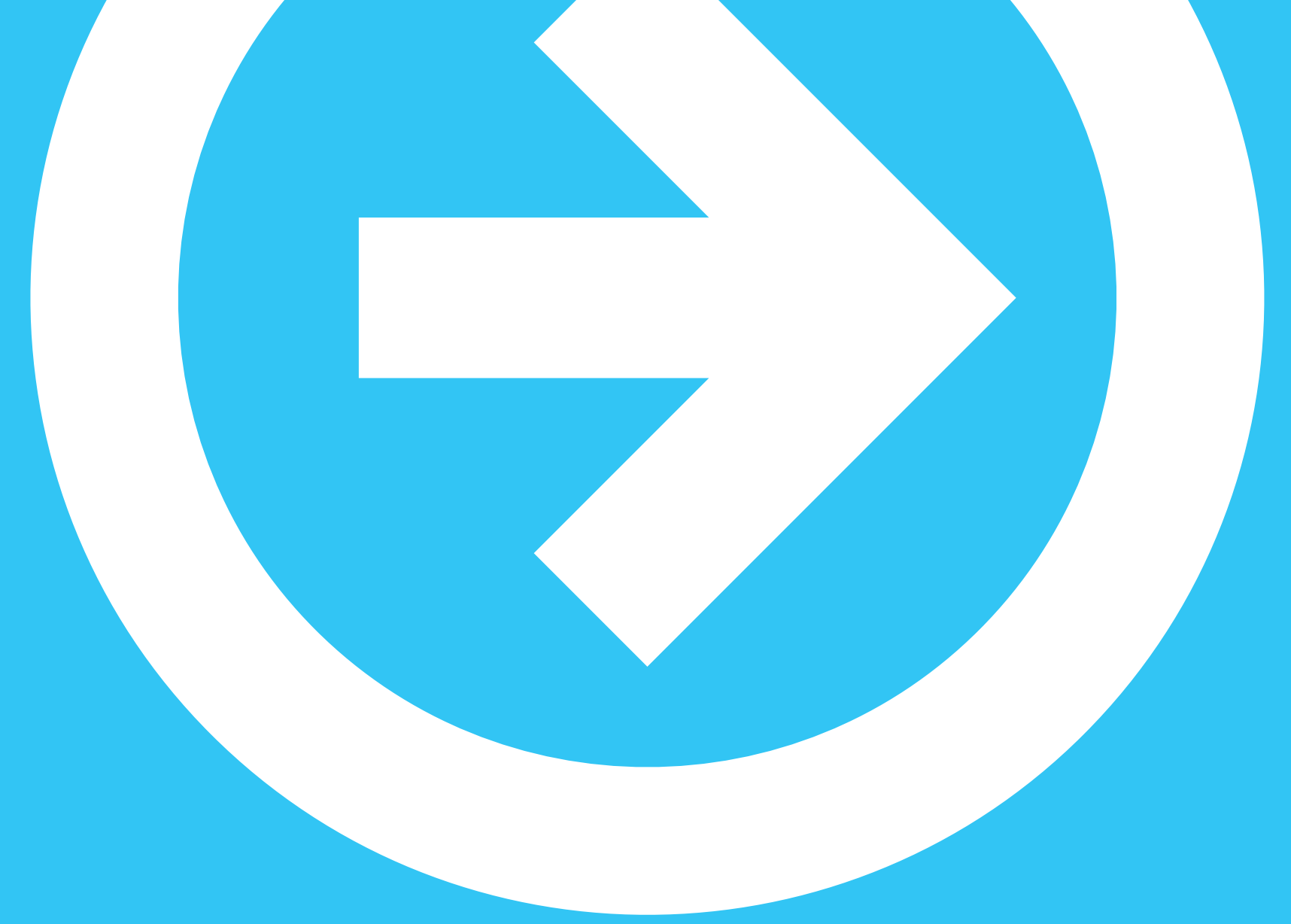
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# We're Champions of Change

We're after progress that's sustainable,  
experienced, *micro, and macro.*

# Champions of Change vision

**Ovative's social impact program seeks to foster a culture inclusive of all dimensions of difference and to develop and sustain career pathways for historically marginalized communities.**

# Champions of Change mission

**With an intentional focus on representation and inclusion, we fearlessly unlock potential within our team and communities.**

# Champions of Change values

We don't chase progress, we create it by living our values with intention and by elevating one another. Because when change is rooted in our DNA, it's not only more effective, but lasting.



## Engaged

We show up for the team as a thoughtful partner committed to driving impact and progress.



## Accountable

We follow through on our words with action to build trust and drive progress as a team.



## Driven

We are committed to excellence, aiming to have impact in what we do for team, clients, and community.



## Inclusive

We strive to enable all people to participate and thrive, especially those who have been historically excluded or marginalized.



## Genuine

We are our sincere, honest, and open selves with the team to drive meaningful interactions.

# Champions of Change evolution



2016-2019

## Early days

“The marketing industry is one of many that aren’t nearly as diverse as the general population. Since the early days of Ovative, we’ve been on a journey of learning how to turn our positive intent into positive action. We’ve always started by building equity within our walls before focusing our attention beyond our walls.”

– Dale Nitschke, Founder and CEO

Grounded in our values and spurred by a “Just Do” mindset, Ovative committed to meaningful impact long before the program’s formalization. Through a now long-standing partnership with The BrandLab, Ovative invested in a scholarship program, built apprenticeships, and engaged in anti-racism learning.

2020-2023

## The formalization of Champions of Change

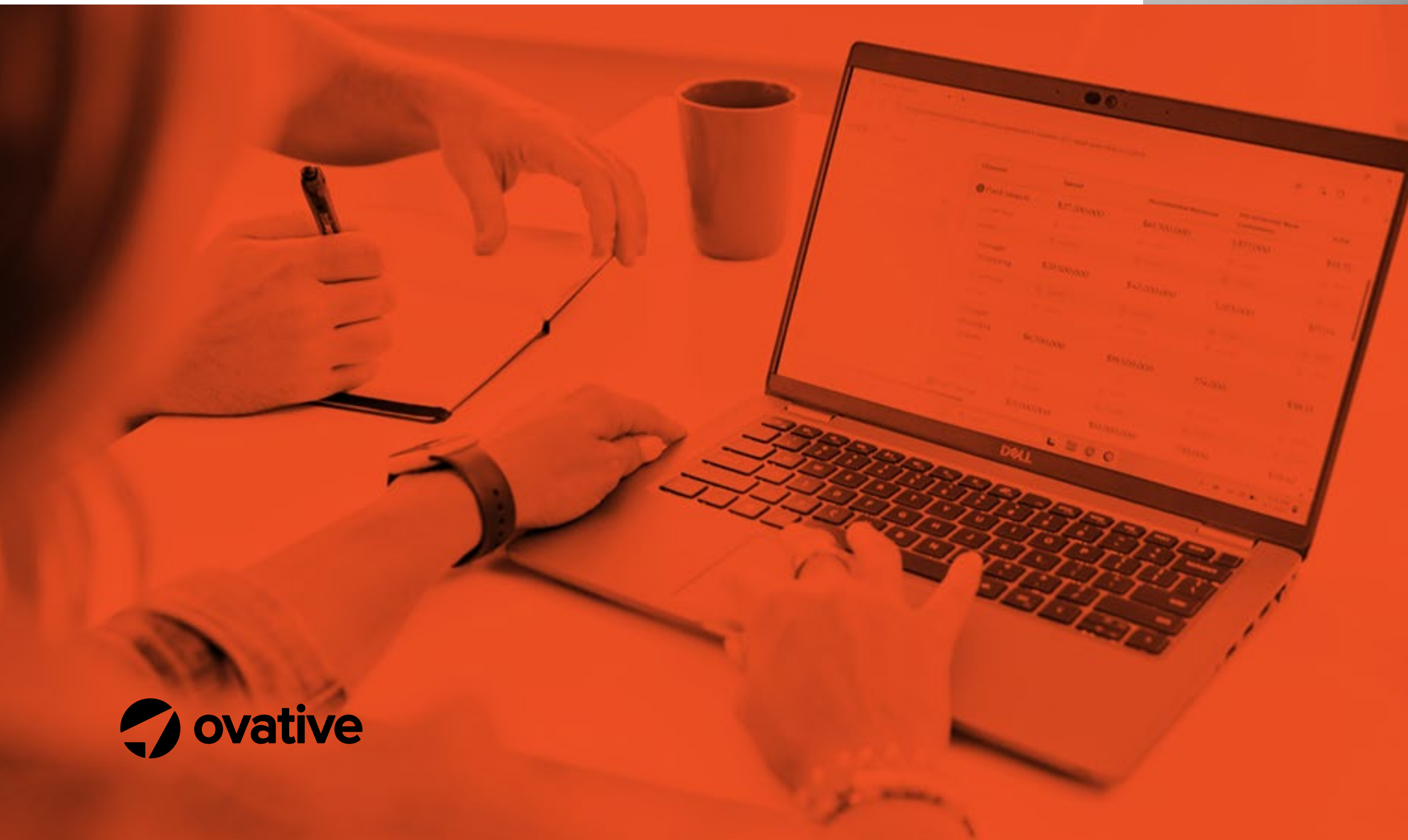
Champions of Change’s formalization encompassed dedicated roles, a DEIB Steering Committee, Diversity Resource Groups (DRGs), ongoing anti-racist education, and a pro bono services model that put our digital marketing skills to work in the community. With early-stage guidance from community partners, the program became an engine for meaningful, sustained action: advancing representation and inclusion across Ovative and beyond.

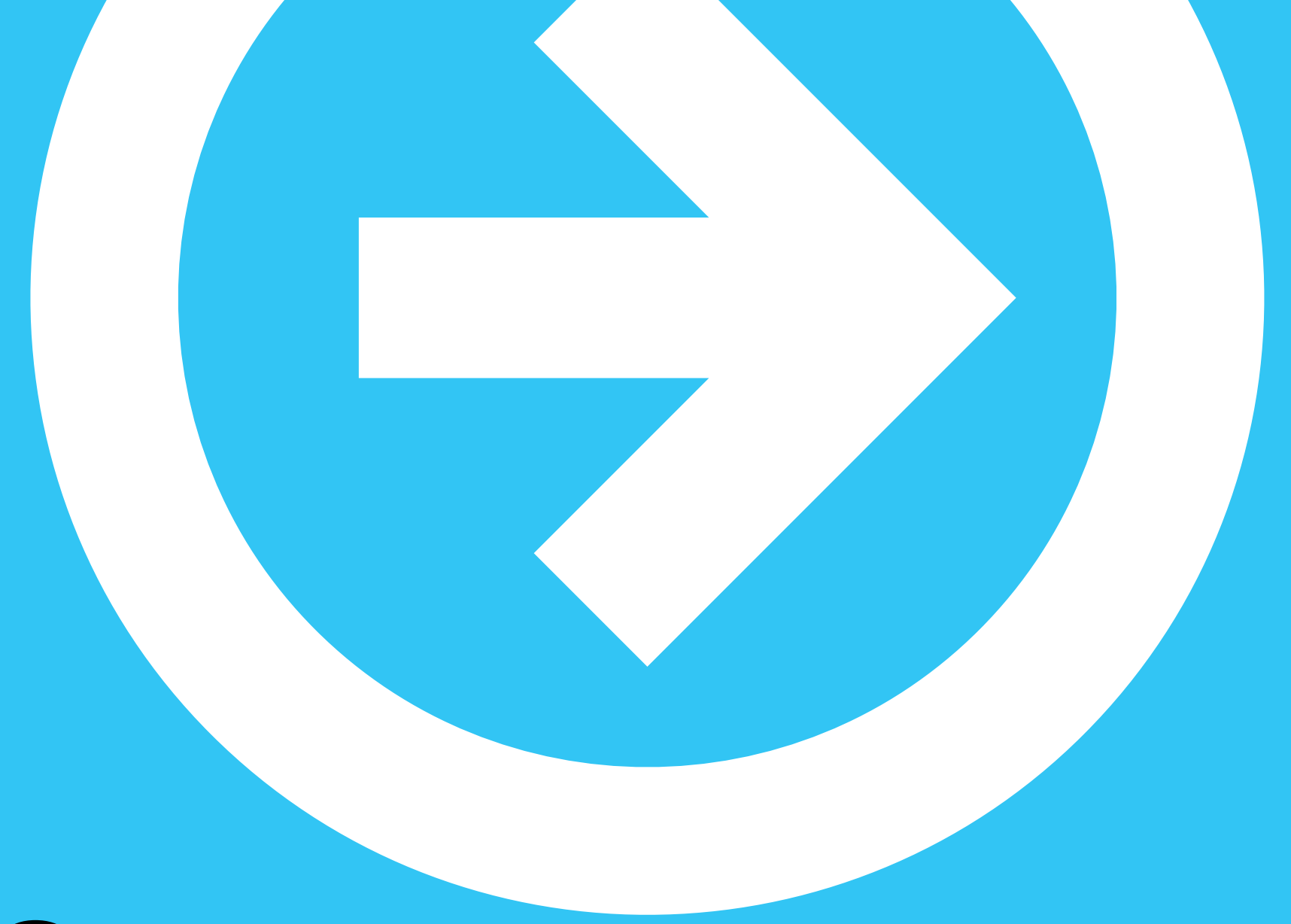
2024-Present

## Development and scale

“Our goal has always been to create a program that can not only be sustained, but that can be scaled and improved upon. Our anti-racist training has been iterated upon and is now fully internally sustainable. And our pro-bono services program has focused on scalability to meet the common needs of community partners.”

– Jason Giltner, Sr. Manager, Champions of Change



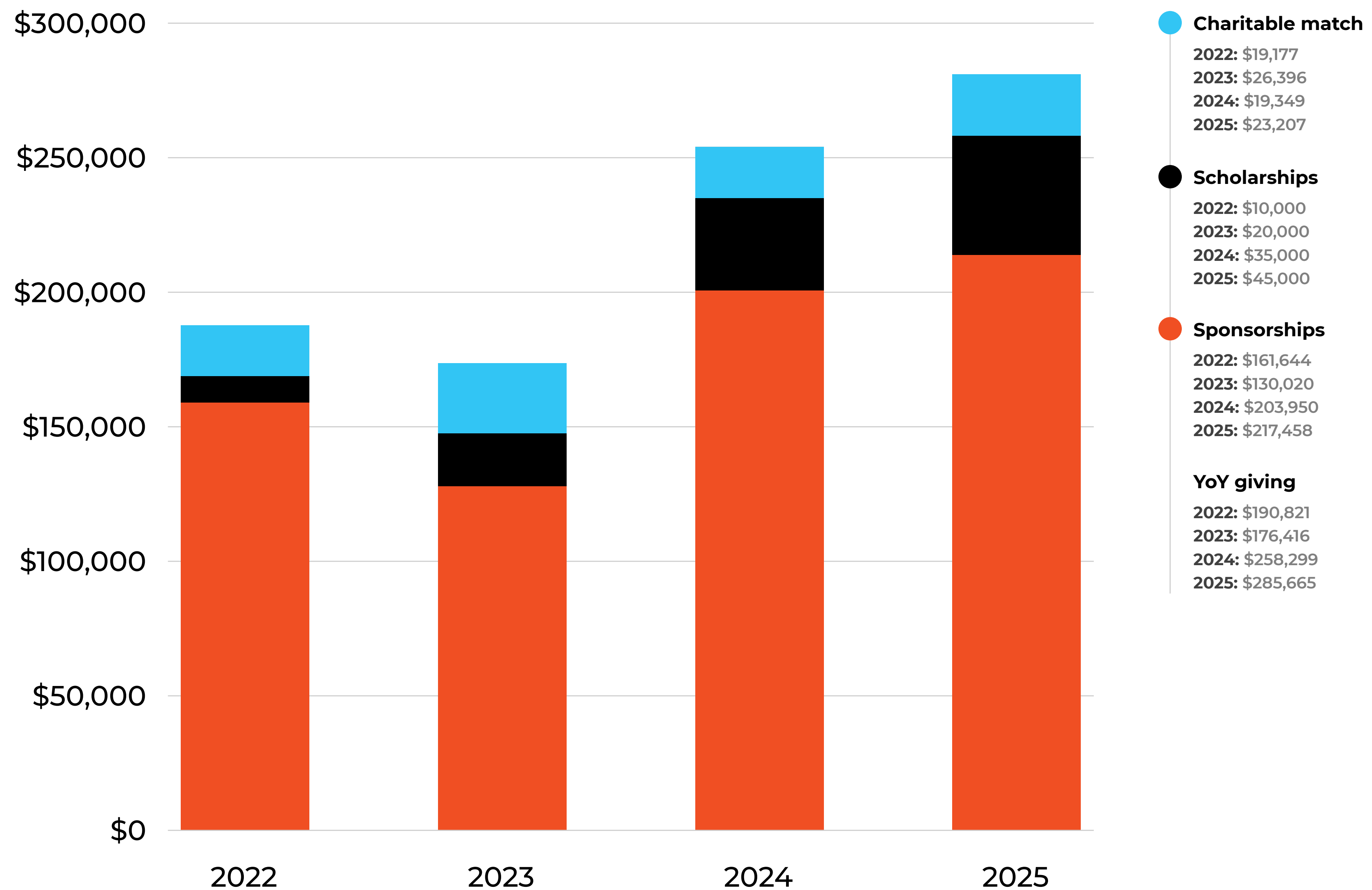


# Advancing representation

Charitable + Pro bono  
giving services

# Charitable giving

We aim to expand access and opportunity for historically marginalized communities, empower employees to meaningfully contribute, and strengthen community impact through strategic partnerships.



## Charitable giving recipients



## Charitable giving

# 2025 awarded scholarships



The BrandLab seeks to open the marketing and advertising profession to all voices and perspectives through inclusion, exposure, access, and opportunity.

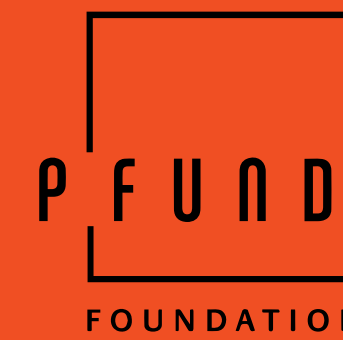
**\$20k has been awarded to four scholarship students of The BrandLab.**



HOWARD  
UNIVERSITY

Howard University's 21CAP program introduces foundational business skills, addresses factors that impede retention for first-time college students, and integrates students, from the very beginning of their college careers, into the contemporary business environment.

**\$15k has been awarded to eight scholarship students of Howard University's 21CAP program.**



The PFund Foundation builds equity with LGBTQIA+ communities across the Upper Midwest by providing grants and scholarships, developing leaders, and inspiring giving.

**\$10k has been awarded to two scholarship students of the PFund Foundation.**

Charitable giving

# Ovative Fun Run



Ovative's 2nd annual  
Fun Run fundraiser  
successfully **raised**  
**\$50k** toward 2026  
scholarships.



# Pro bono services

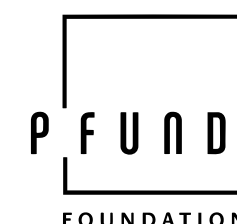
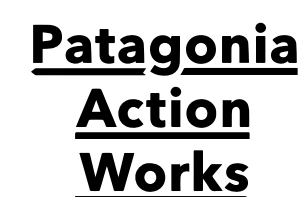
We aim to amplify the impact of community organizations by applying expertise where it's most needed to create pathways for historically marginalized communities. We offer our full suite of digital marketing services pro bono through a variety of productized offerings and custom project engagements.

**\$400<sup>k</sup>**  
worth of pro bono services provided

**15%**  
of Ovative team members participated in pro bono work

“To be able to partner with an organization like Ovative and provide our world-class nonprofits with the type of skills that an entrepreneur might need to bring their work to scale is a game-changer.”  
—Andrew Dayton

## Pro bono clients



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Pro bono services

# Growing the future of downtown

**Keiona Cook**

Owner of Lovely's Sewing  
& Arts Collective



**Empowering BIPOC and Women  
Entrepreneurs with Minneapolis  
Downtown Council and Northside  
Economic Opportunity Network (NEON)**

## Pro bono services • Growing the future of downtown

Ovative provided pro bono support for the Chameleon Shops Program in partnership with the Minneapolis Downtown Council and NEON, helping foster a more inclusive and vibrant downtown by uplifting BIPOC and women-owned entrepreneurs. **Since launching in 2019, the program has supported more than 350 small business owners, expanding access to opportunities that are too often out of reach.**

In 2025, thirteen entrepreneurs completed an intensive eight-week program focused on business development, finance, compliance, marketing, and branding. Four were selected to advance to location scouting and lease negotiations as they prepare to open brick-and-mortar storefronts.

### Participants in the Chameleon Shops Program



**Ana Castillo Jiménez**  
Owner of Ana's Apothecary



**Daovone Garbart**  
Owner of Moon & Stars  
Children's Boutique



**Jeena Gurung Vomhof**  
Owner of Namaste Brows  
and Boutique



**Keiona Cook**  
Owner of Lovely's Sewing  
& Arts Collective

## **Pro bono services • Growing the future of downtown**

**For the past three years, Ovative has partnered with NEON to develop a digital marketing curriculum covering marketing fundamentals, website best practices (SEO and UX), and organic and paid social media strategies.**

**This curriculum—now used by small business owners across the Twin Cities through NEON and the Neighborhood Development Center—shaped the Chameleon cohort’s experience, alongside Ovative-led office hours that gave entrepreneurs direct access to expert guidance as they refined their marketing strategies and strengthened their visions.**

Supported by:



Amy



Andy



Candice



Ellie



Katie



Koel



Raquel



Sam



Tory

**Pro bono services**

# Empowering emerging leaders at Howard University

“Now in their second year of partnership, Ovative Group continues to stand out as an engaging, informative and fun brand for our students. Their partnership is foundational to helping business students build their personal brands, professional networks and ultimately, their careers.”

– Melissa Gould

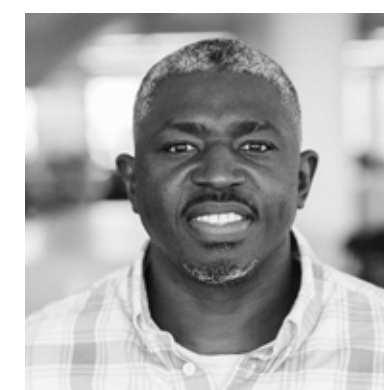
Manager of 21CAP Program at Howard University School of Business

Watch this video with Lina Ahmed, Manager of Talent Services at Ovative, sharing her hopes for Ovative's partnership with Howard University's 21CAP program.



In 2024, Ovative joined Howard University's nationally recognized and deeply innovative 21st Century Advantage Program (21CAP), a business education model designed to launch students into their careers with confidence and momentum. As one of just 17 corporate sponsors, Ovative helps provide the foundation for student teams—each guided by an upperclassman mentor—to engage in competitive, experience-based learning that mirrors the real world. Through 21CAP, students gain essential business skills, confront and overcome the barriers that challenge first-time college students, and become immersed in the contemporary business environment from the very start of their academic journeys.

Supported by:



Derrius



Jennifer



Larrick



Lina



Valentina

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**Pro bono services**

# Advancing wellness, opportunity, and equity with V3 Sports



Watch this video with Malik Rucker, Executive Director of V3 Sports, sharing more about the role Ovative plays with his organization and the impact these partnerships can have at-large.



The V3 Center is a transformative new hub rooted in a powerful mission: **to elevate the North Minneapolis community through wellness, fitness, and education.** More than a facility, it represents a profound investment in economic empowerment, innovation, and social justice for a neighborhood that has long been under-represented and under-resourced.

For the past two years, Ovative has been honored to stand alongside V3 Sports as a multifaceted partner—**contributing pro-bono expertise across website design and infrastructure, paid and organic media, and strategic planning**—to help bring this vision to life and expand its impact for the community it serves.

Supported by:



Ameera

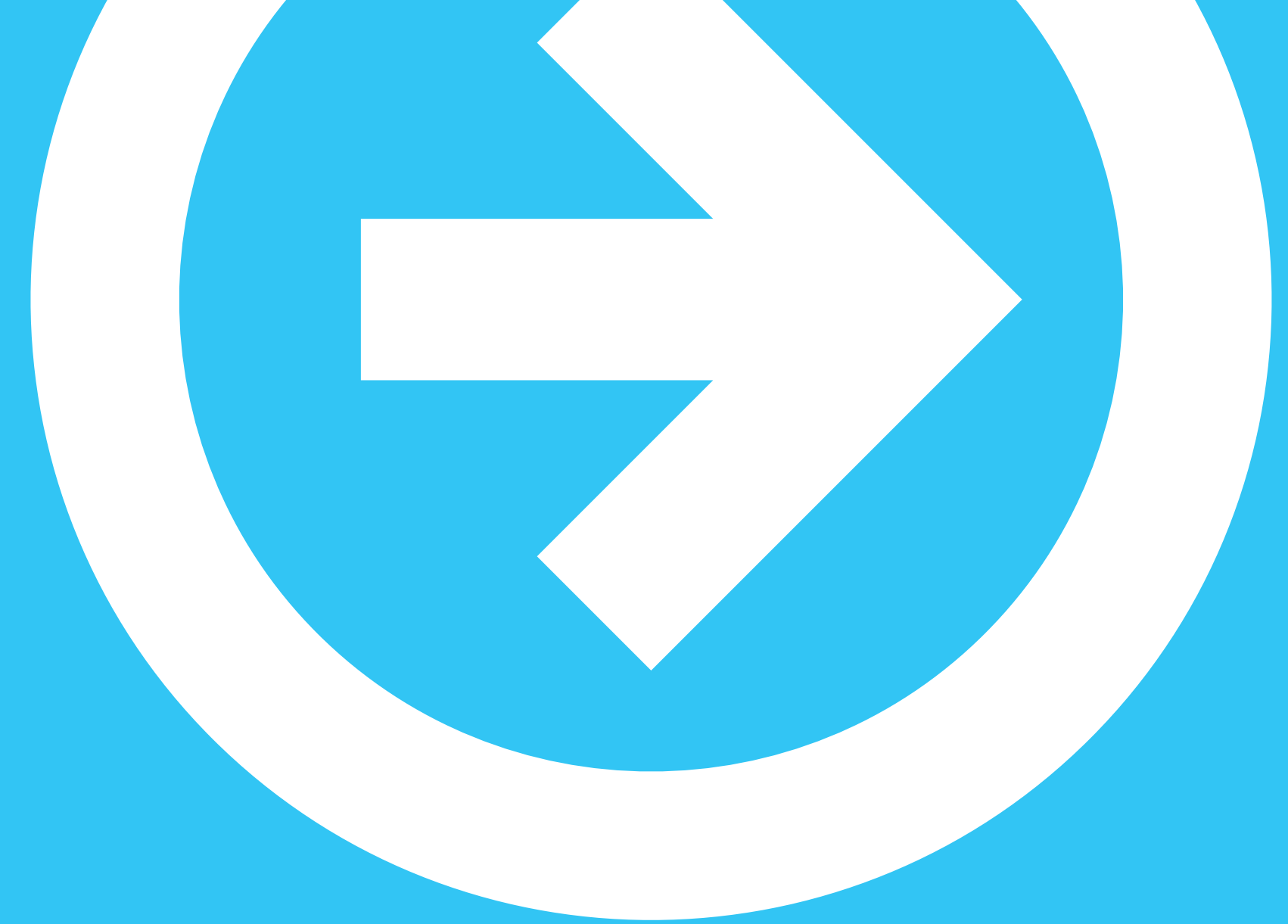


Trushna



Valentina

# Advancing inclusion



**Equitable  
Operations** + **Cultural  
Agility  
Education**

# Equitable operations

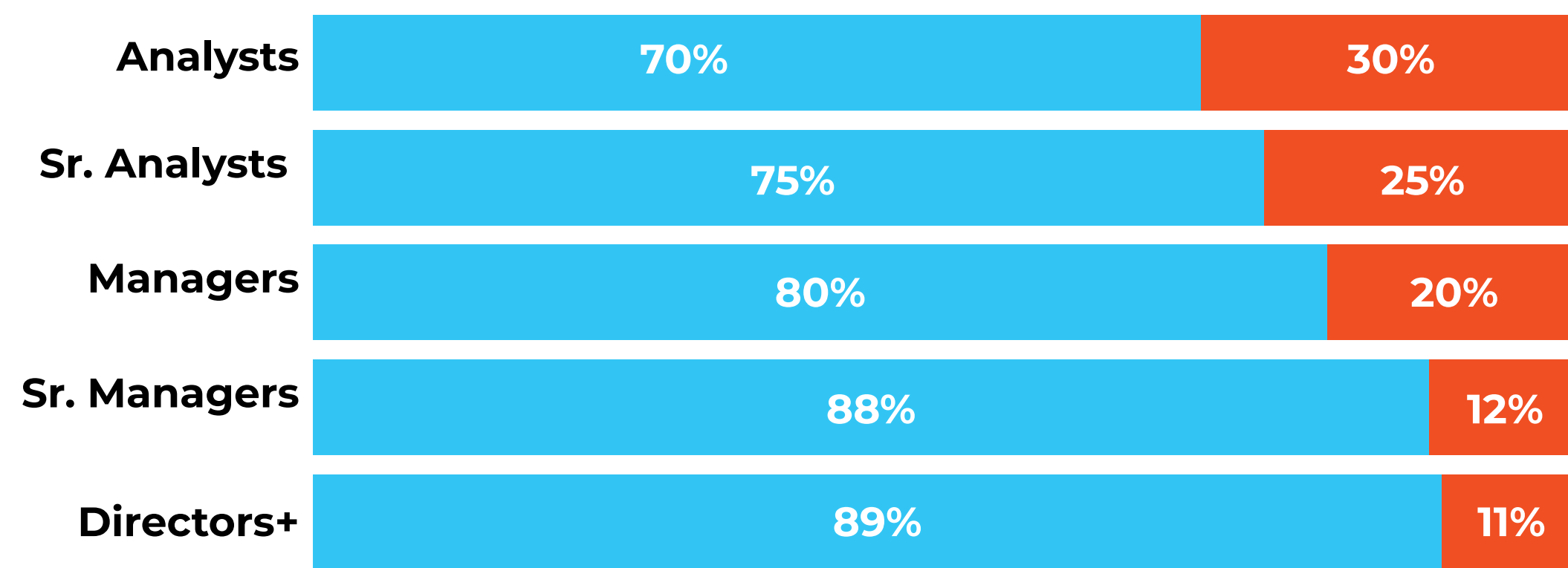
**We aim to strengthen equity and belonging across our internal systems, empower DRGs to build community and elevate underrepresented voices, and activate the DEIB Committee to lead inclusion initiatives.**

## Equitable operations

# Diversity and Equity Progress

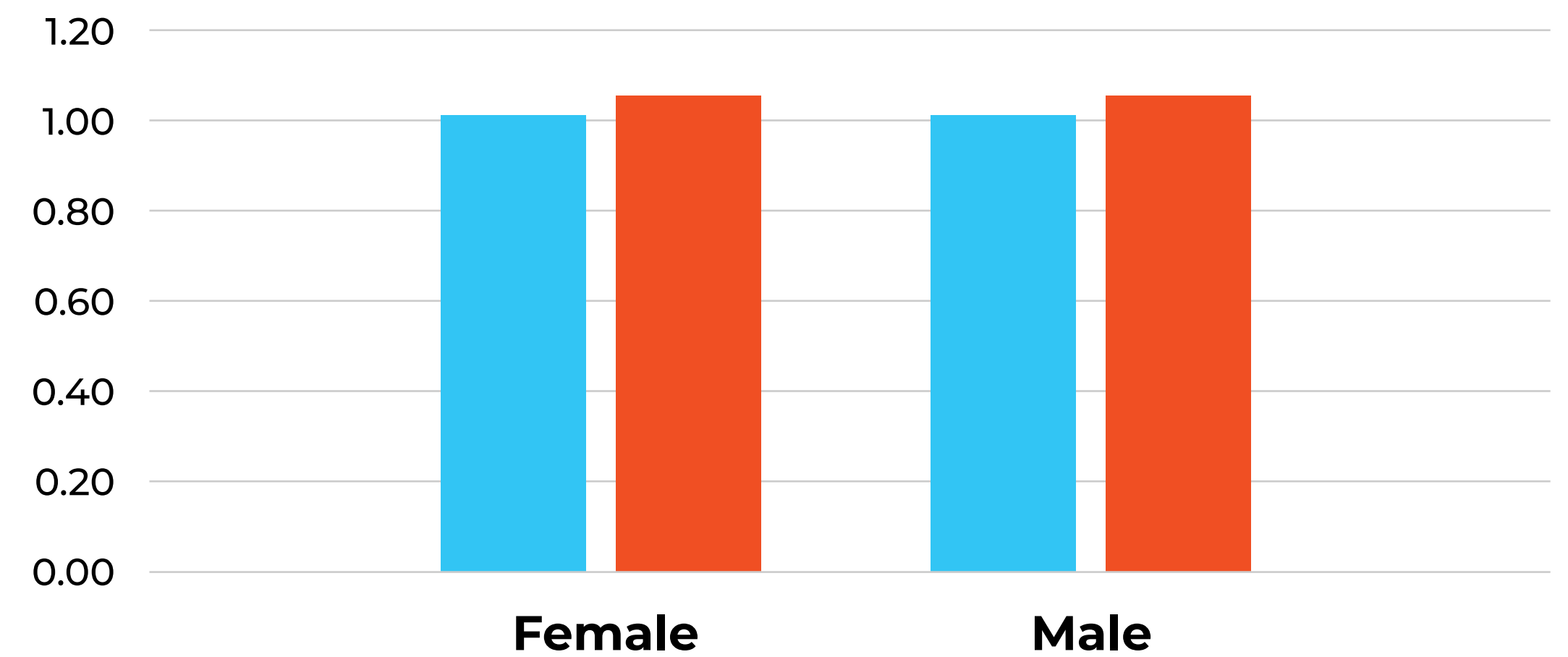
2025 BIPOC mix

● % White ● % BIPOC



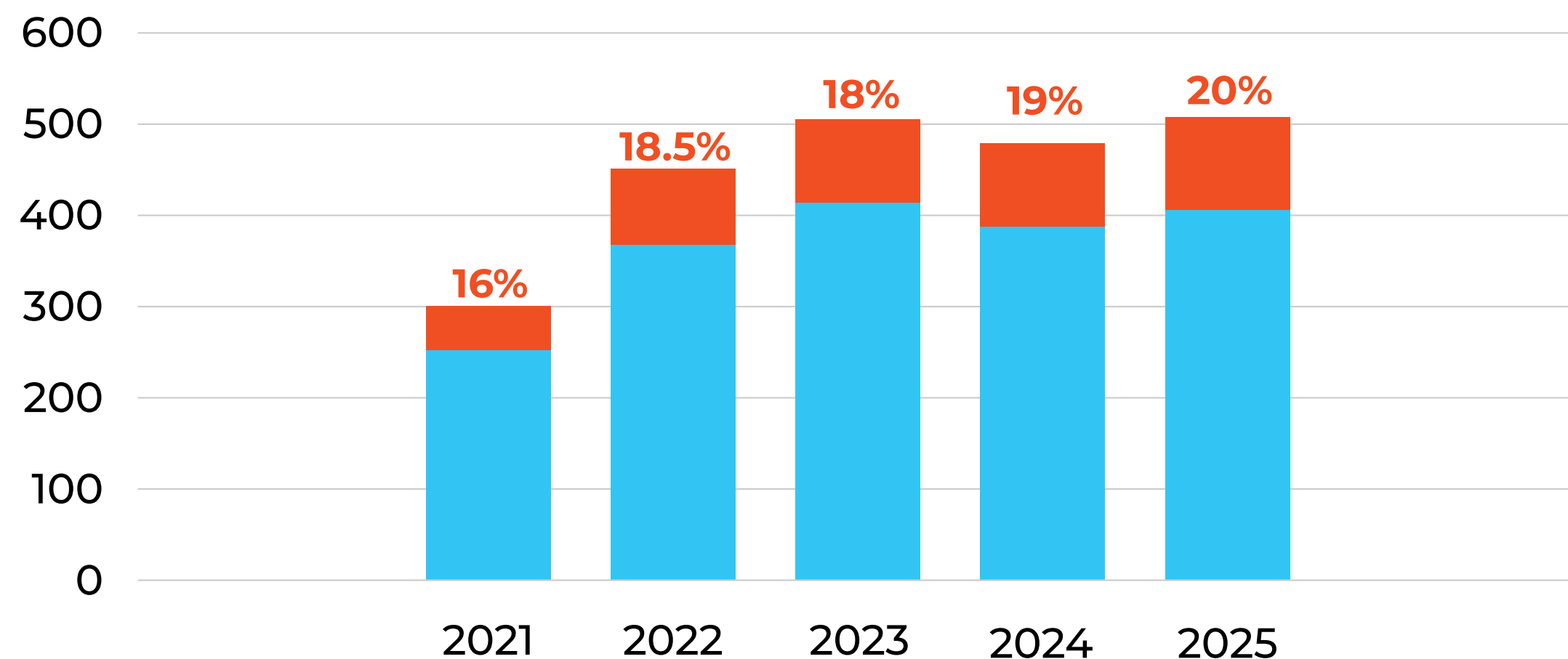
Median COMPA ratio

● White ● BIPOC



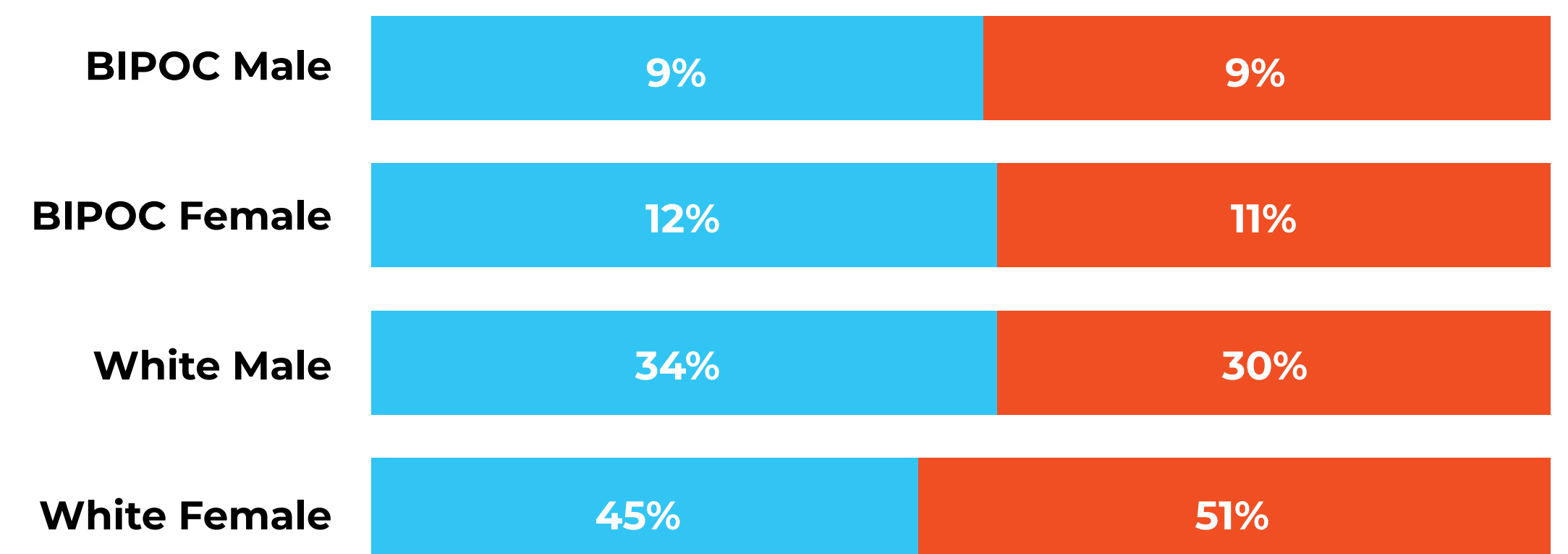
Ovative team headcount

● White ● % BIPOC



Race/gender % promotion

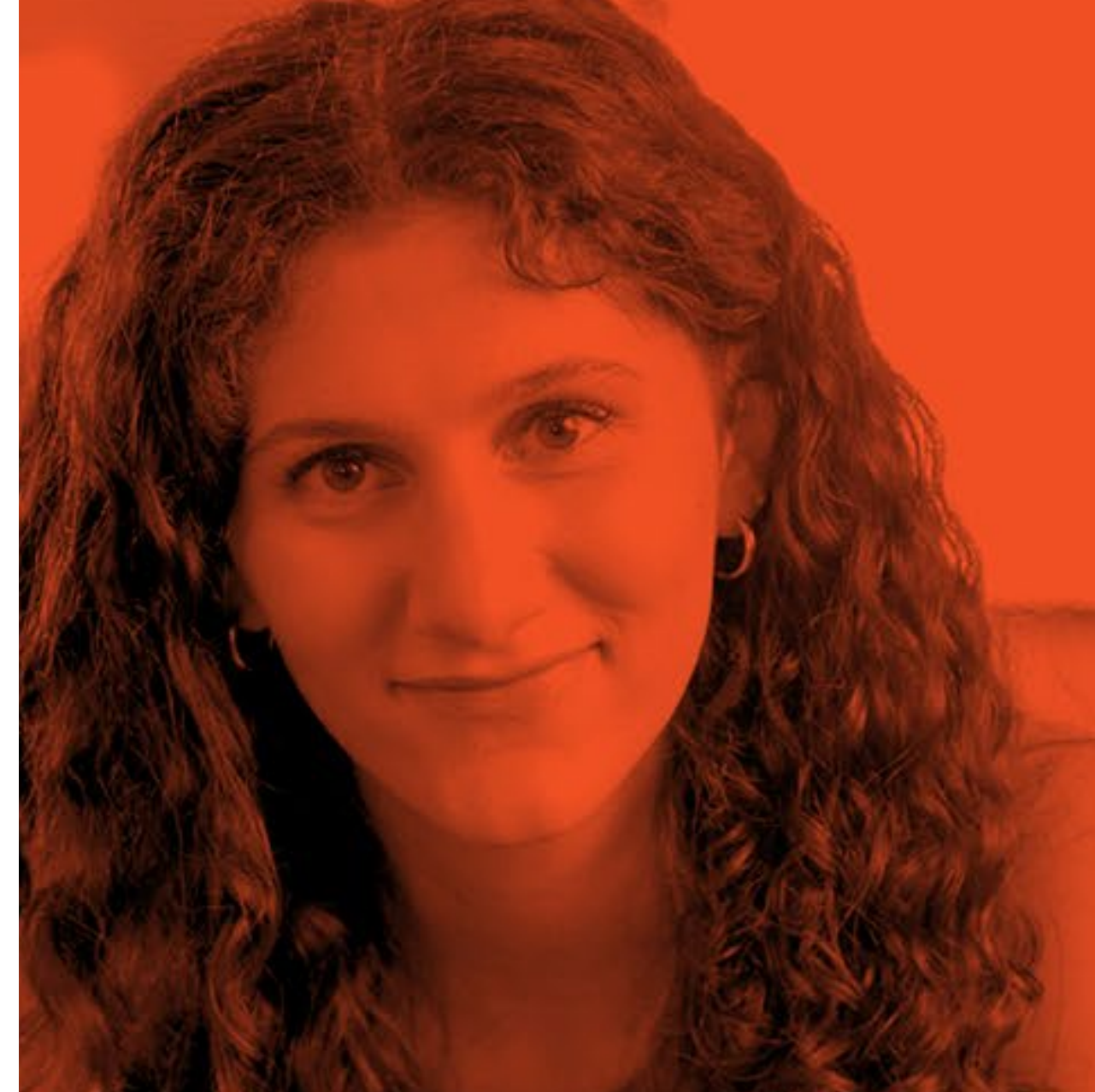
● % of Org ● % of Promos

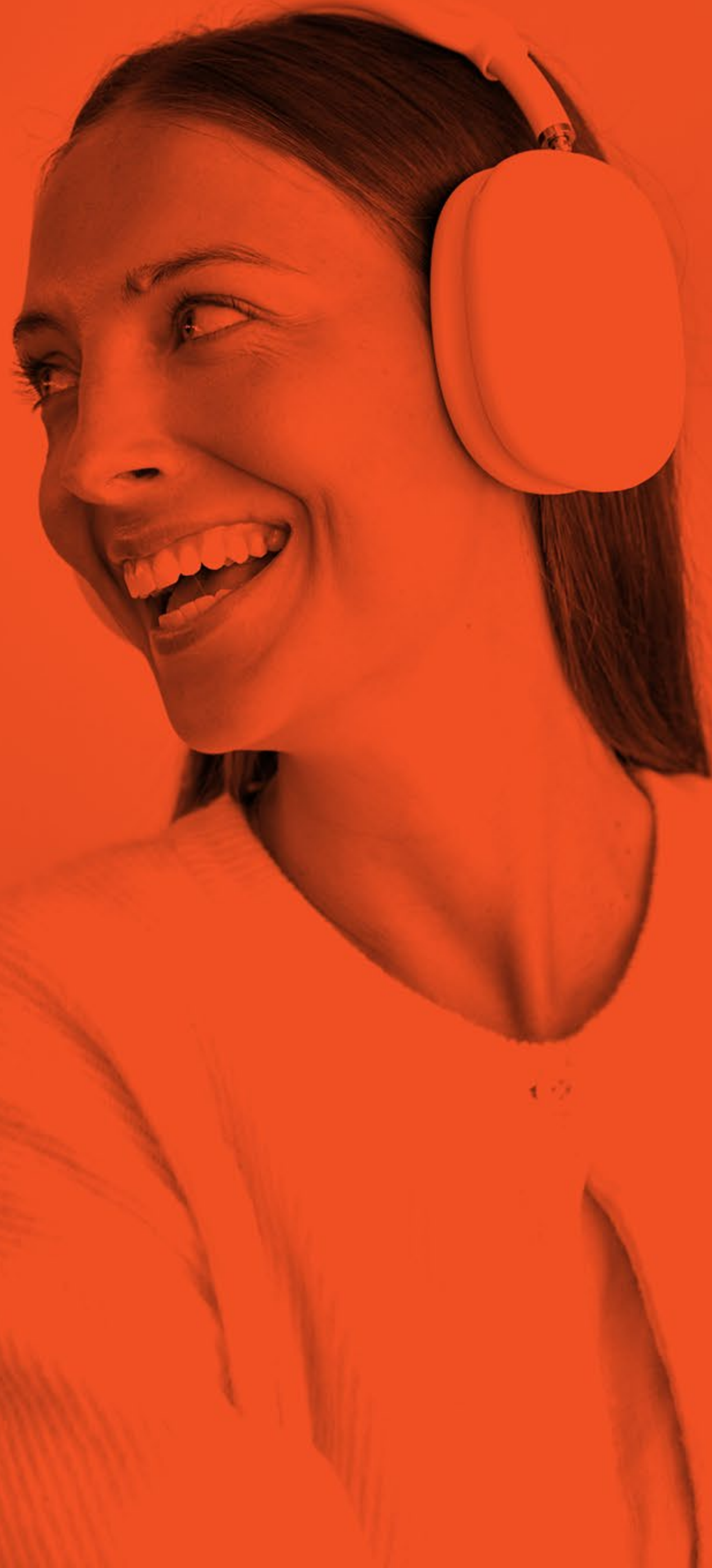


**Equitable operations**

# **Diversity Resource Groups (DRGs)**

**Through our DRGs, we seek to create a community for underrepresented groups, provide a safe space for open discussion and meaningful experience sharing, and build comfort and confidence so members can elevate their voice and impact across Ovative.**





## Equitable operations

# WIN

## Women's Initiative Network

Through WIN, Ovative's women seek to support and inspire each other to grow as leaders, foster an inclusive environment, and champion the collective strength of women in driving innovation, success, and positive change. Our 2025 highlights include:

- **Women's History Month Perspective Series** where Generational researcher Kim Lear shared how generational and gendered differences shape today's workplace culture, leadership, and media behaviors.
- The **Winter Virtual Market** which spotlighted women-owned, LGBTQ+, and BIPOC small businesses from across the country through intentional, values-driven holiday shopping.



## Equitable operations

# Open

## LGBTQIA+ community

Through Open, Ovative's LGBTQIA+ community seeks to create a culture of inclusivity and equity where all queer individuals are valued, enabled to participate and thrive, and can discuss their queer identities. Our 2025 highlights:

- Ovative supported LGBTQ+ community members by helping match individuals with resources and assistance through our **PFund Volunteer Match Day**.
- Ovative attended the **Human Rights Campaign Minneapolis Annual Dinner** to support LGBTQIA+ advocacy efforts and engage with leaders advancing equality and human rights.



**pangea**



## Equitable operations

# Pangea

## BIPOC community

Through Pangea, Ovative's BIPOC community seeks to create a culture of inclusivity and equity where all BIPOC individuals feel valued, empowered to thrive, can embrace differences, and leverage the unique perspectives and talents of every team member. Our 2025 highlights:

- Ovative spotlighted the Black, female-owned **Kobi Co Candle Company** and celebrated women entrepreneurship while creating space for intersectional connection and community.
- Ovative hosted the **Juneteenth Perspective Series**—a powerful conversation on identity, resilience, and racial equity, highlighting the importance of intentional listening and allyship.

# Cultural agility education

**We aim to build shared anti-racist and inclusive competency, equip team members with the skills and confidence to act, strengthen accountability in everyday decisions, and sustain learning that deepens awareness across all dimensions of difference.**

## Cultural agility education

# Building an inclusive culture with anti-racism training

We invest in anti-racism training to build the will, skill, and capacity of our teams, creating shared language around identity, privilege, and inclusion. This work moves us from awareness to action and strengthens our ability to address bias, practice accountability, and build equitable relationships.



Watch this video with Devrae Hudson, Director of Champions of Change, sharing the impact of our anti-racism training.



In 2025, team members engaged in a 10-month curriculum covering:

→ **Inclusivity in action:** Built shared understanding of microaggressions and moments of inclusion, examined internal data insights, and practiced how to notice, interrupt, and give feedback in real time.

→ **Racial identity development:** Explored how racial, gender, and sexual identity development shapes lived experience, perspective, and behavior in the workplace.

→ **Diversity and networking:** Increased awareness of how networks influence opportunity and belonging and introduced strategies for building a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

→ **Detour spotting:** Developed skills to recognize common communication “detours,” identify which ones show up personally, and apply Elevate Leadership Platform (ELP) tools to engage in more effective, constructive dialogue.

→ **Intersectionality and Wheel of Power:** Examined where power shows up at Ovative, increased awareness of how intersecting identities influence power dynamics, and identified opportunities to take action toward meaningful change.

→ **Feedback:** Strengthened inclusive feedback practices by centering identity, emotion, and intent to support trust, growth, and accountability.

## Cultural agility education

**Bolstering anti-racism progress with inclusive coaching.**

**We reinforce learning through an Inclusive Coaching model that scales practice, using tools from our partners at Racially Conscious Collaboration (RCC) and our Elevate Leadership Platform (ELP) to enable crucial conversations and effective communication as we solve complex problems.**

Our 2025 Inclusive coaches:



Devrae



Ericka



Ben



Zak



Samantha



Jennifer



Derrius



Jeni



Eva



Watch this video with Ericka Strickland, VP of Search, sharing her hopes for the Inclusive Coaching program at Ovative.



# Cultural agility education

Ovative's Months of Observance committee creates year-round moments of learning, connection, and celebration that center identity communities.

## Black History Month February

**Discuss:** Ovative facilitated a group viewing of "How Black Americans Were Robbed of Their Land," followed by small-group discussions.

**Engage:** Employees were invited to free, all-office screenings of *The Fire Inside* across Minneapolis, Chicago, and New York.

**Listen:** Our Perspective Series spotlighted Minneapolis creative entrepreneur Houston White and Ovative's own Derrius Jackson, who shared lived experiences, stories of resilience, and insights on relationships, self-belief, and entrepreneurship.

## Women's History Month March

**Discuss:** Ovative held an all-team book club discussion, inviting employees to read *Hood Feminism* or *Invisible Women* and come together to examine intersectionality, data bias, and the lived experiences of women across identities.

**Engage:** WIN held an NCAA women's basketball event during March Madness activities.

**Learn:** A company-wide session focused on the national theme "Moving Forward Together — Women Educating and Inspiring Generations," to reflect on the multigenerational impact, leadership, and contributions of women.

## Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month May

**Engage:** Teams participated in Asian food tours across each office city and learned to play the *hulusi* during a hands-on workshop led by Ph.D. researcher Ziyue Tan.

**Learn:** A company-wide session focused on the national theme of "A Legacy of Leadership and Resilience," spotlighting AAPI representation, the impact of the Model Minority Myth and Bamboo Ceiling, and the stories of AAPI trailblazers.

**Listen:** Our Perspective Series featured jewelry designer Yen Chee, who shared how her background in interior design, lifelong commitment to art, and work with healing stones inform her modern, intentional jewelry.

## Pride Month June

**Discuss:** Ovative held a discussion on "Rethinking the Closet: Coming Out LGBTQIA+ versus Inviting In," with themes centered on conscious allyship and reducing burdens on queer colleagues.

**Learn:** A company-wide session explored the meaning of Pride, why we celebrate, and how Ovative supports LGBTQIA+ colleagues through the Open DRG, addressing "rainbow washing" by distinguishing genuine allyship from performative gestures.

**Listen:** Our Perspective Series featured Tom Hoch, Chair of the Minneapolis Downtown Improvement Council, who shared his journey from teacher to lawyer to civic leader.

# Cultural agility education

## Latinx Heritage Month Mid-Sep - Mid-Oct

**Discuss:** The team gathered for a discussion centered on a TED Talk by Elizabeth Camarillo Gutierrez, who reflected on her journey toward opportunity and stability in the U.S., challenged simplified narratives about the immigrant experience, and offered insights on how to better support those around us.

**Explore:** Employees accessed a resource guide featuring Latinx books, films, podcasts, businesses, and creators.

**Learn:** A company-wide session explored the impacts of immigration on the Latino community and highlighted influential Latinos who shaped culture in 2025.

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## Native American Heritage Month November

**Discuss:** The team gathered for a discussion on Aaron Huey's powerful photography documenting America's Native prisoners of war.

**Engage:** Ovative teams visited local cultural institutions—including the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Field Museum in Chicago, and the MET in New York—and were invited to attend NativeRise's Ribbons & Blues Gala, supporting AIOIC's transformative workforce and education programs.

**Learn:** A company-wide session explored the history of Tribal Nations across Minnesota, Illinois, and New York and highlighted the Land Back Movement, a global Indigenous effort to restore sovereignty and reconnect Native peoples with their ancestral lands.



# Ovative's DEIB Committee

**As the steering committee for Champions of Change, it sets direction and accountability for our inclusion and representation efforts, with focused workgroups that actively shape priorities and programs across the year.**

## DEIB Committee members:

**Erin Aberg**

**Josh Angevine**

**Alex Arnason**

**Feyisayo Ayobamidele**

**Arwa Bashir**

**Emily Bollinger**

**Mary Kate Evon**

**Jason Giltner**

**Kahla Gleason**

**Bonnie Gross**

**Jennifer Harley**

**Ben Henschel**

**Devrae Hudson**

**Kaitlyn Huss**

**Sean Irwin**

**Shannon Kast**

**Libby Koch**

**Amy Lear**

**Maddie Lemkuil**

**Adam Lueck**

**Jeni Luker**

**Emilio Maldonado**

**Alexander Matoushek**

**Beth McKigney**

**Dale Nitschke**

**Troy Neidermire**

**Patrick Schumaker**

**Greta Seitz**

**Justyna Stewart**

**Ericka Strickland**

**Erin Threlkeld**

**Trushna Visavadia**

# Ovative's Champions of Change team

The Champions of Change team translates the DEIB Committee's guidance into programs and practice across Ovative.

Please reach out to Ovative's Champions of Change Team for additional information:



Erin Aberg  
VP of Talent Services

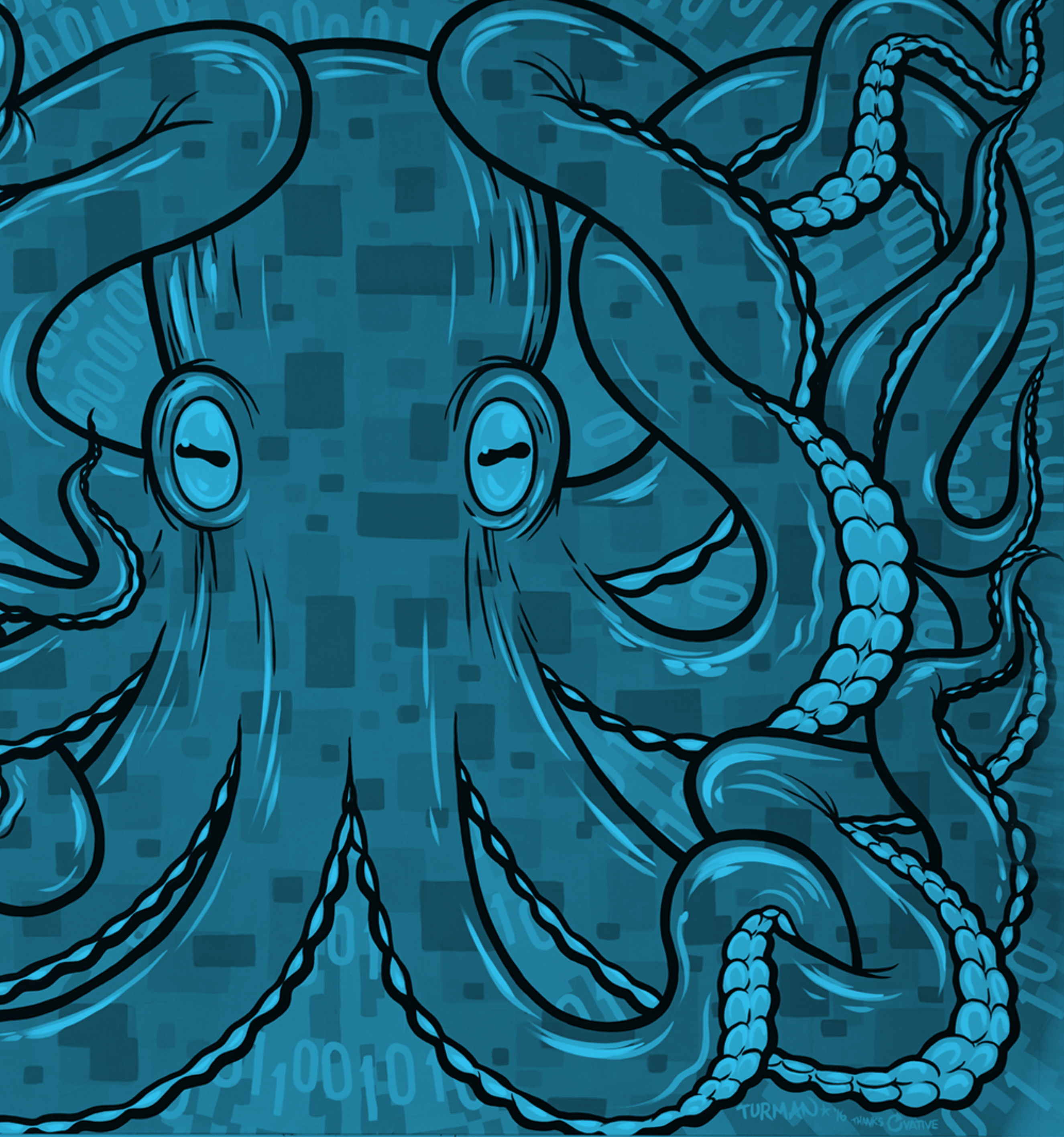


Jason Giltner  
Sr. Manager of  
Champions of Change

[championsofchange@ovative.com](mailto:championsofchange@ovative.com)



champions of change



Ovative Group is an independent, full-funnel media, measurement, and creative firm. We're all about raising the bar every day, and it shows. Our work has been recognized by organizations like Digiday, Google, Inc. 5000, USA Today, and Search Engine Land.



# champions of change



Join us in turning  
values into action.

Let's talk about how  
we can amplify impact,  
together.

**ovative**

[championsofchange@ovative.com](mailto:championsofchange@ovative.com)

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