

E-book

The rise of the data-driven nonprofit finance leader

How nonprofit finance leaders can drive strategy and performance with data-driven decision making.

Sage



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Introduction

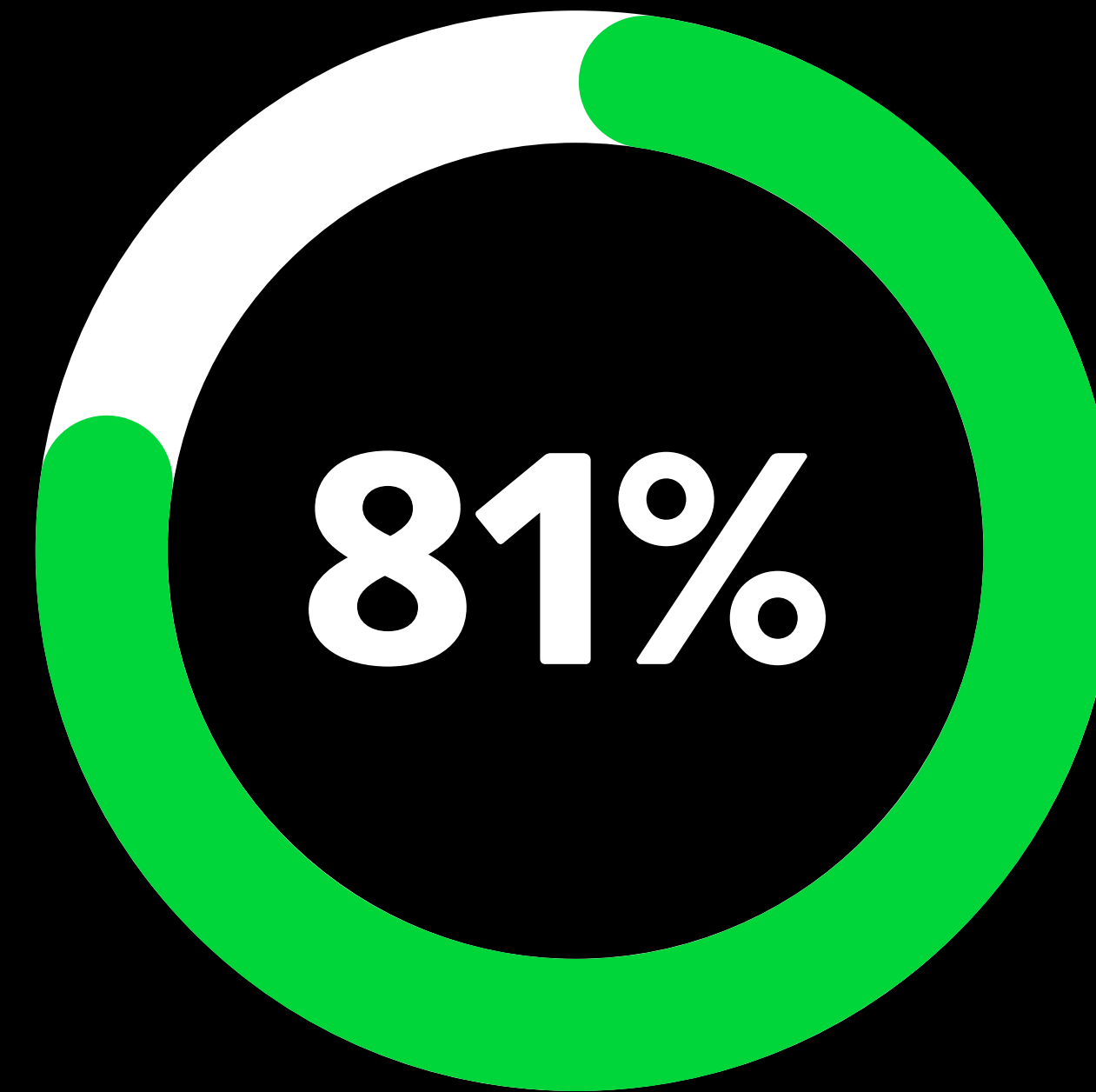
The evolving role of nonprofit financial leadership

Time is the scarcest resource for today's nonprofit finance leaders.

Nonprofit finance leaders are more than bookkeepers. They're pivotal in driving their organization's mission and success. And yet, 75% of their time is consumed by routine accounting tasks and managing risks, limiting their ability to lead strategically.

This imbalance leaves one in three nonprofit executives making critical decisions reactively or with significant delays—missing opportunities to drive their mission forward. By focusing on automation, data-driven decision-making, and integrated financial systems, CFOs can reclaim their time and shift their focus to high-impact, mission-driven initiatives.

This E-Book explores how finance leaders can move beyond daily operational tasks and lead their organizations to greater mission success.



81% of CFOs believe they are not keeping up with the pace of change well enough³.

Armanino LLP, "CFO Evolution 2.0, The Path to the Transformational CFO," October 2017.

PwC and The Economist Intelligence Unit, "Gut & gigabytes: capitalizing on the art of executive decision making," 2014.

Armanino LLP, "CFO Evolution 2.0, The Path to the Transformational CFO," October 2017.

Actionable insights are essential for financial leaders to amplify mission impact

Nonprofit finance leaders need to be able to focus on growth for their organizations instead of “accountant and protector” mindsets created by task management.

As a finance leader, streamlining core financial processes is essential to focus on forward-thinking strategy. By automating tasks like bookkeeping, compliance, and risk management, you free up time to integrate your experience with data, trends, and history—driving the organization toward greater mission success. However, while 77% of senior finance leaders recognize the need for a data-driven finance function, 64% admit their teams are not proactive enough in using data and analytics to resolve critical issues.



To truly lead, nonprofit finance leaders need the right tools and enough time to turn data into actionable insights, focusing on strategy and impact. By leveraging data to monitor performance, optimize resource allocation, and assess outcomes, you can ensure every decision moves the organization closer to its mission. This proactive approach not only drives organizational success but also reduces reactive decision-making, empowering finance leaders to make strategic choices with confidence.

PEOPLE - PROCESS - TECHNOLOGY

LEADER

Forward looking & strategic

Traditional time allocation

25%

Desired time allocation

50%

PROTECTOR

No surprise

Traditional time allocation

20%

Desired time allocation

20%

ACCOUNTANT

Fast & accurate

Traditional time allocation

55%

Desired time allocation

30%

Argyle Executive Forum / Sage Intacct survey, April 2018

Where are you on your journey to financial leadership 4.0?

Go real-time with financial leadership 4.0. Purge the clutter from financial processes and pave the path toward mission goals. Forward-looking CFOs have switched to real-time month-end close, data visualizations, and reports – with always-ready presentations and financials. Tap into onhand filings, visuals, board books, and consolidations, with fluid integrations with hundreds of powerful platforms like Salesforce and ADP.

Financial leadership 1.0

- Financial historian
- Backward-looking financial statements
- Too many manual accounting tasks
- Limited reporting and financial visibility

Financial leadership 2.0

- Business analyst
- Cloud financial management
- Real-time reporting and dashboards

Financial leadership 3.0

- Data-driven strategist
- Technology futurist
- Leverage AI insights
- Predictive analytics guide strategic planning

Financial leadership 4.0

- Real-time month-end close
- No-code reports, visuals, and board books
- Rapid integrations unify your process

Finance Transformation Magazine, “Achieving CFO 4.0 with Sage Intacct” Hannah Munro, Q3, 2022.

Data-driven

Becoming a data-driven strategist to maximize your organization's impact

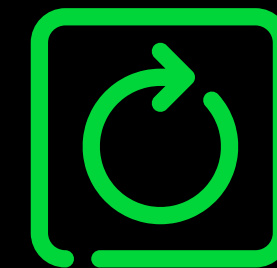
For nonprofit finance leaders to maximize impact, you must transcend financial management and step into the role of a strategic leader by implementing the right people, process, and technology within your nonprofit.

By using real-time data to drive decisions, you can not only enhance organizational performance but also experience greater personal satisfaction from focusing on what truly matters: advancing the mission and creating lasting value for their organization and themselves.



People

Your finance team needs curious, creative, analytical people who will monitor data, identify trends, and hypothesize how to achieve success for the organization.



Process

The appetite for progress is clear: 81% of CFOs believe there is room for increasing automation to drive further efficiency gains⁶.



Technology

You need three technological capabilities to become data-driven:

1. Automated financial operations
2. Multi-dimensional analysis of key metrics
3. Synchronized data with other systems in real-time

Growthforce, "Why CFOs Are Looking to Automate More," 2022

Children's Hunger Fund gains timely insight to **drive** program decisions

“

The productivity we've gained with Sage Intacct allows us to make sense of our financial data, as opposed to the traditional accounting world where you just get your debits and credits in and hope they're correct. Now we can analyze our data to better forecast for the future, and make decisions about what we as an organization can do to advance our mission.”

Christopher Sue,
CFO, Children's Hunger Fund



Automation

Automation unlocks time for strategic impact

With automation, nonprofit finance leaders can shift from routine tasks to strategy. That's why 79% plan to invest in process automation with solutions like Sage Intacct to unlock greater impact.⁸

Automation with Sage Intacct empowers finance leaders to lead strategically:

- **78%** are broadening their influence beyond finance.
- **87%** feel pressure to collaborate across functions.

Sage Intacct accelerates efficiency and enables finance leaders to focus on impact by reducing or eliminating the time non-profits spend on tasks such as:

- **Consolidating financial information in Excel** for multi-entity, multi-location, and multi-currency organizations.
- **Calculating revenue recognition in Excel** after compiling project-based time and expense information from sales and HR systems.
- **Performing manual data reconciliations** and manual data re-entry between systems.
- **Calculating allocations using data that doesn't exist** within some traditional accounting systems.
- **Processing vendor payments** and manually routing paper approval sheets.

Organizations are looking to CFOs for strategic leadership:

- **85%** of CFOs believe they will become more involved in strategy and counsel for the overall business.
- **57%** predict a surge in collaboration with other senior executives and board members, indicating a move towards a more cohesive leadership model.
- **60%** foresee a future where their insights will increasingly influence company-wide strategy.
- **59%** of CFOs expect more interaction with the CEO and the board, while 57% predict closer work with CIOs and 55% with CTOs.

CFO.com, "The CFO's changing role: problem-solving, tech and leadership — report" Andy Burt, May 23, 2024
Deloitte, "CFO Signals" Q4, 2022



How automation enables Canine Companions to **expand mission impact**

“

To see where the organization was five years ago and how it's performing now with modern automation and insight has been very gratifying. Sage Intacct made it very easy to absorb our rapid growth in transactions, and we did it efficiently while maintaining internal controls. We're now realizing economies of scale.”

Jack Pierce,
CFO, Canine Companions



Leverage multi-dimensional analysis to **drive mission success** and financial performance

GAAP reporting is essential, but it doesn't tell the whole story for nonprofit finance leaders.

Nonprofits must track both financial and non-financial performance, such as program effectiveness and mission outcomes. Data-driven finance leaders are putting the general ledger at the center of your data strategy, combining it with non-GAAP metrics to gain a more complete view.

By incorporating multi-dimensional analysis, finance leaders can make decisions that balance financial health with mission impact.



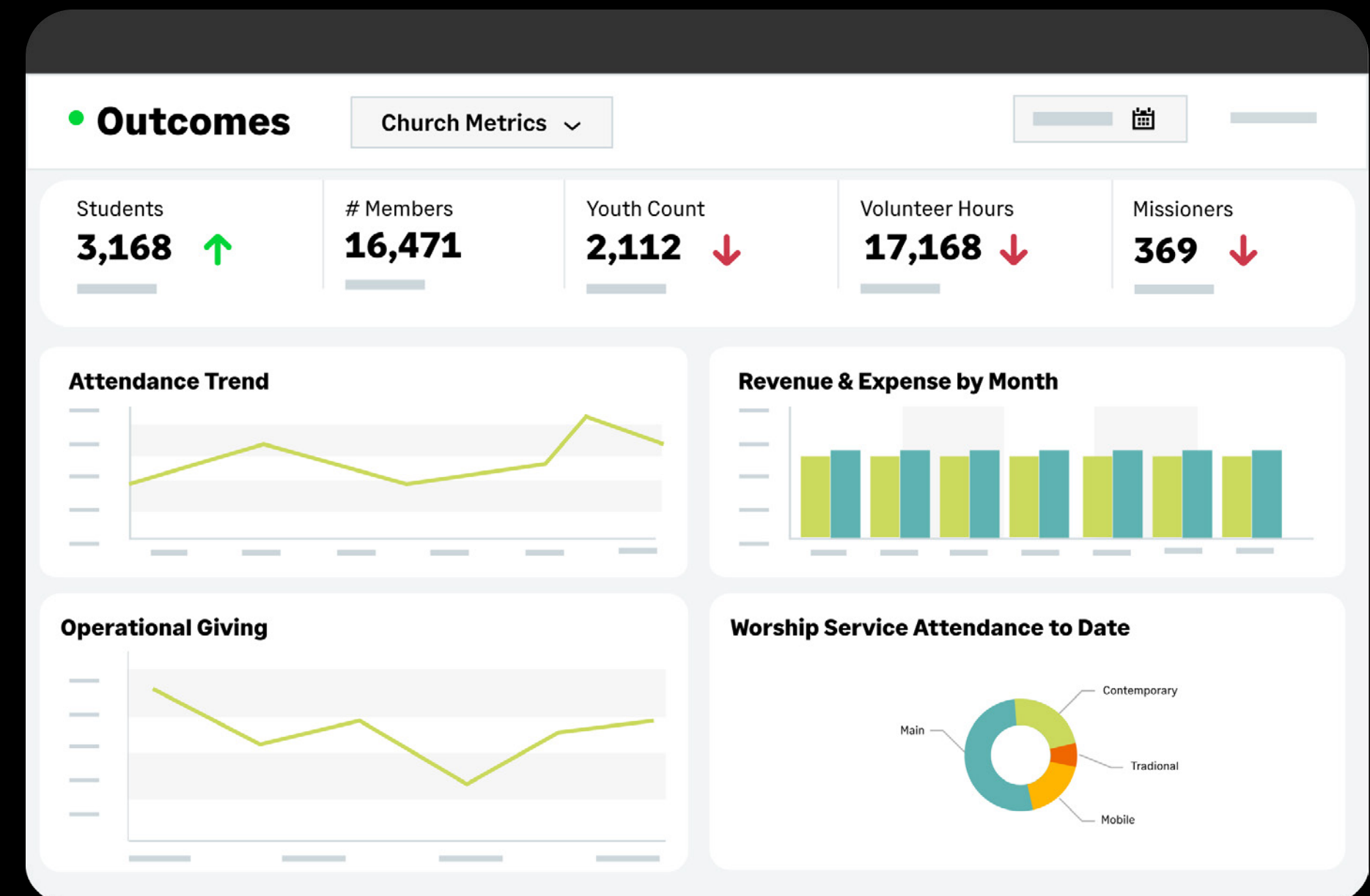
This approach ensures nonprofits meet both financial and mission-based goals by tracking key non-financial metrics—such as headcount or labor hours from HR, the number of meals served, patients treated, or educational courses delivered. Integrating donation and funding data from donor management systems can also provide deeper insights into resource allocation and mission success.

Multi-dimensional analysis goes beyond traditional accounting, integrating financial, operational, and program data for a more holistic view of performance. This approach enables nonprofit finance leaders to not only track financial health but also the real-world impact their organization is making in the community.

Tracking outcome metrics to **measure mission, not just finance**

Statistical accounts in Sage Intacct help track and report on non-financial data to monitor outcomes and impact. This type of measurement allows you to connect your executives, board, funders, and donors with the human side of your mission—whether that impact is measured in patients treated, meals served, or workers trained.

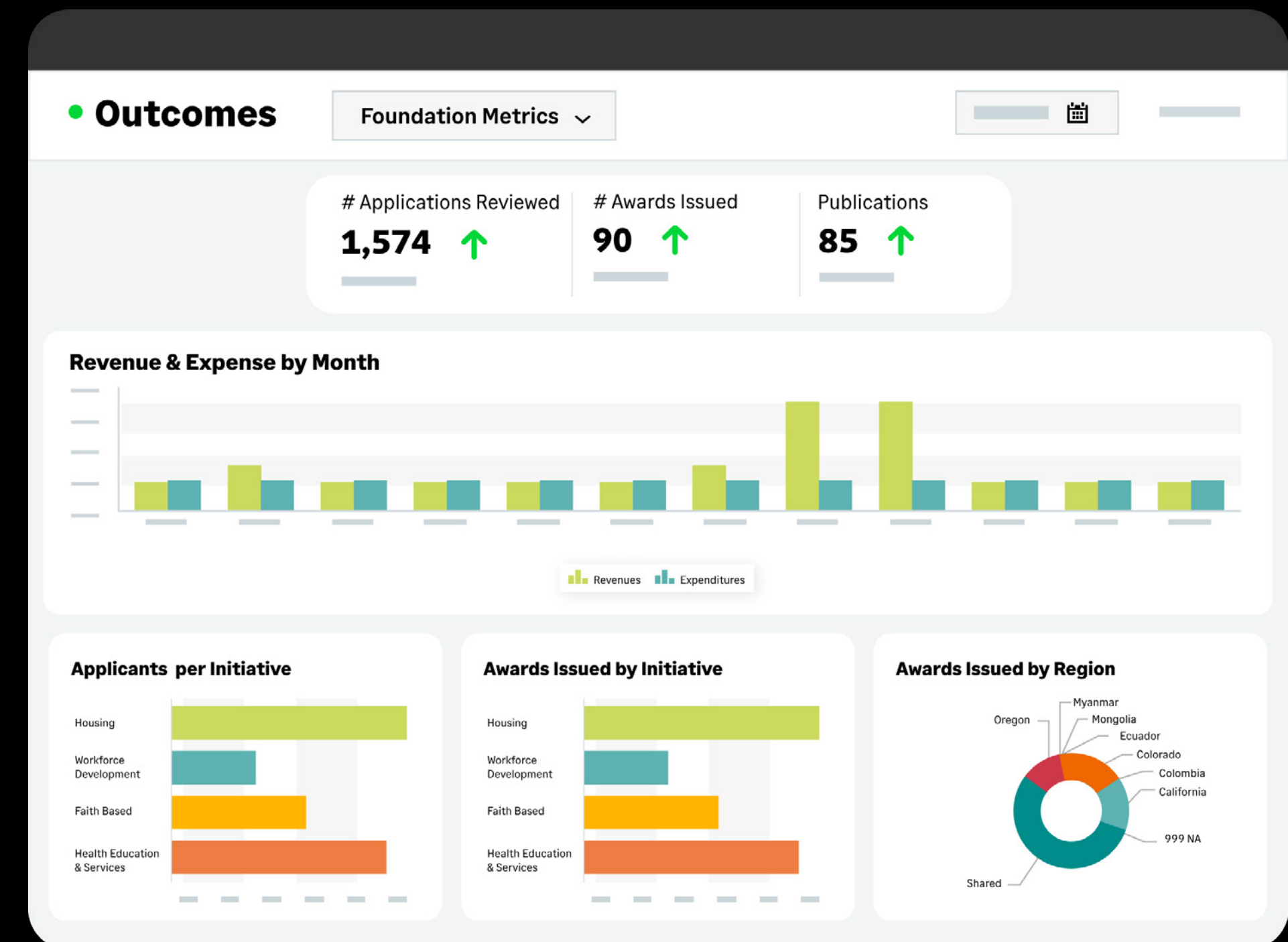
An outcomes dashboard lets you display important financial data side by side with outcomes and compare the real-time data in the current period against prior periods or years. Statistical accounts demonstrate how well your organization achieves its mission more effectively than traditional financial reports alone.



Visualizing your data to communicate mission impact

Data visualization goes beyond numbers—it helps finance leaders tell the story of your nonprofit’s impact. With intuitive dashboards and visual reports, you can present your organization’s mission success alongside financial performance.

These visual insights allow stakeholders to see the direct connection between resources and impact, empowering leaders to make strategic decisions that further the organization’s cause.



Hope Haven boosts net income with new operational insights

“

Sage Intacct is our one-stop-shop where we see not only the organization's financial information, but statistical details like income and expenses per constituent as well. One thing that's been really helpful for us is Sage Intacct's personalized dashboards, where each manager, executive, and finance team member can get the information they need in one place and drill down to explore the data as needed.”

Dana Bakker,
Controller, Hope Haven



Add dimensions in your **chart of accounts**

Dimensions in your chart of accounts work like labels that help categorize and provide additional context to your financial data.

By adding dimensions, you can easily track, filter, and analyze your financial reports in more meaningful ways—specific to your organization’s needs. This enables better insights into your performance and supports more informed decision-making.

How dimensions help:

- **Tailored Reporting:** View financials by specific programs, grants, or locations.
- **Efficient Analysis:** Quickly sort and filter data to get the insights that matter most.
- **Real-Time Insights:** Generate up-to-date dashboards to see how your organization is performing at any moment.

Examples of dimensions for nonprofits:

- **Program:** # of meals served
- **Volunteer Impact:** # of volunteer hours
- **Revenue:** # of revenue per clinician
- **Courses Delivered:** # of courses delivered
- **Region:** # of members in Texas



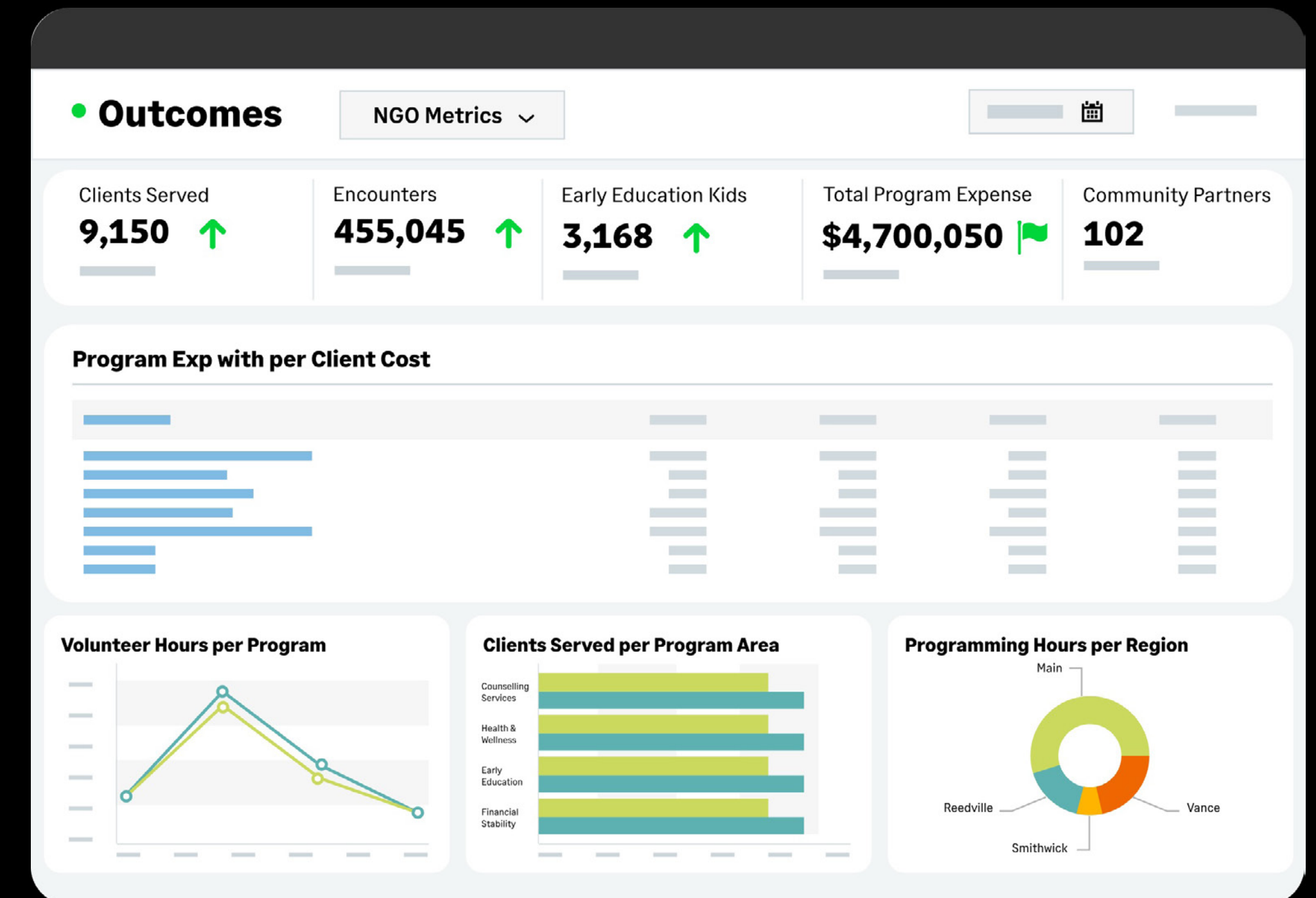
Why this matters:

Dimensions help you align financial reporting with the goals of your mission. They simplify the process of analyzing complex data, enabling you to focus on the impact your organization is making rather than just the bottom line.

Leverage dimensions to slice and dice your data for **maximum visibility**

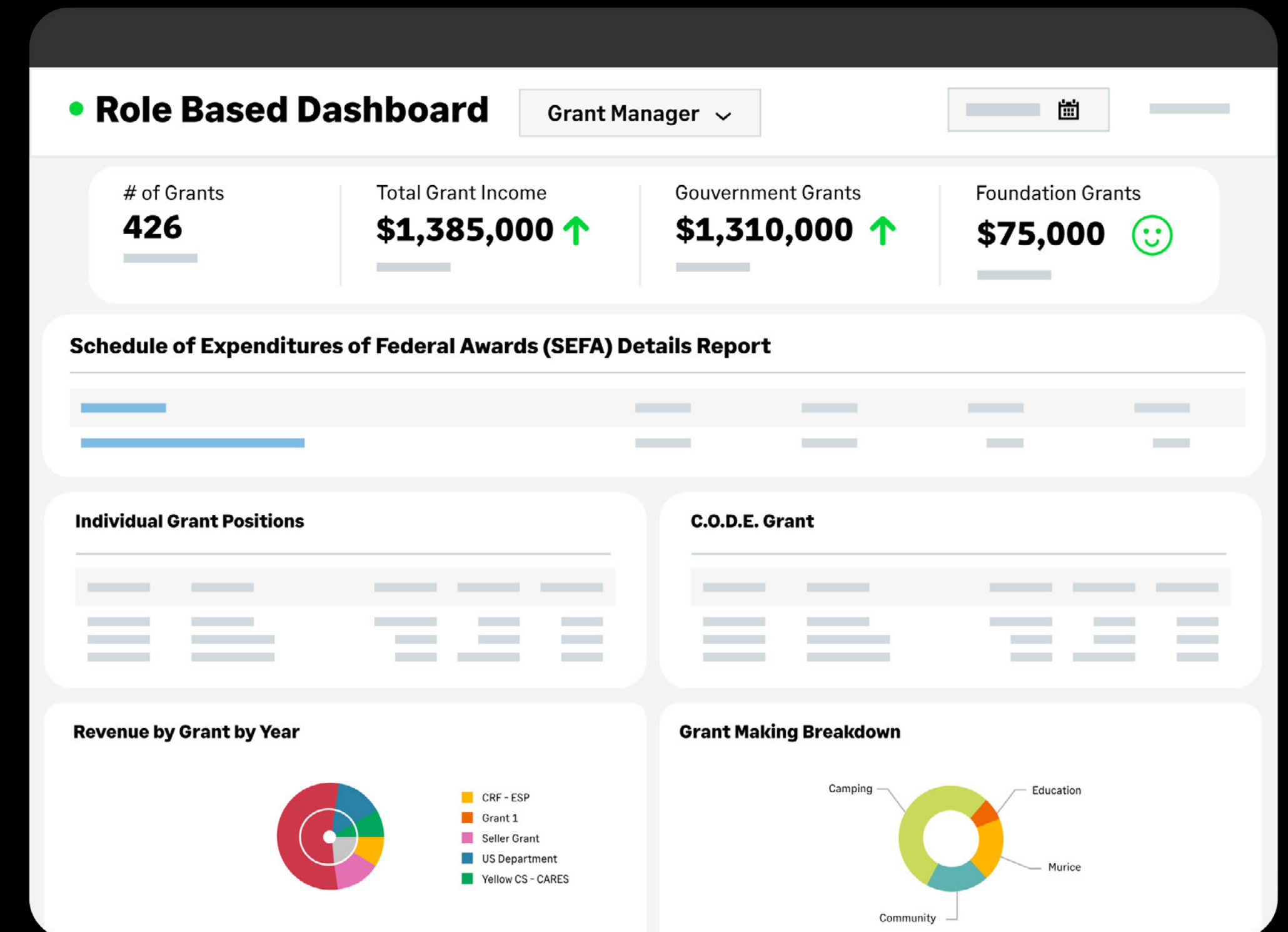
Dimensions allow nonprofit organizations to break down their financial and operational data in meaningful ways, such as by program, location, or funding source.

By leveraging these dimensions, nonprofit finance leaders can gain a clearer picture of their mission performance and allocate resources more effectively. This ability to “slice and dice” data helps ensure that financial decisions are directly aligned with the organization’s mission goals.



Real-time dimensional analysis of **key data**

Build role-based dashboards that put financial and operational metrics at your fingertips. Filter data by any dimension to obtain the key results you need for analysis. Take in the high-level view, then drill down to explore ideas or dig deeper into details.



Vitamin Angels turns financial visibility into greater mission impact

“

Using custom dimensions in Sage Intacct to track costs, we identified \$200,000 in logistical savings, which enabled us to provide essential vitamins and minerals to an additional 800,000 undernourished pregnant women and children.”

Bonnie Forssell,
CFO, Vitamin Angels



System integration

Real-time data to drive mission success

Sage Intacct makes it easy for nonprofits to integrate data from multiple sources, providing more informed analysis and decision-making.

By centralizing your data, nonprofit finance leaders gain real-time, actionable insights into both financial performance and mission impact. This comprehensive view allows for faster, more informed decisions, optimizing the organization's effectiveness while reducing workload and enhancing overall fulfillment.

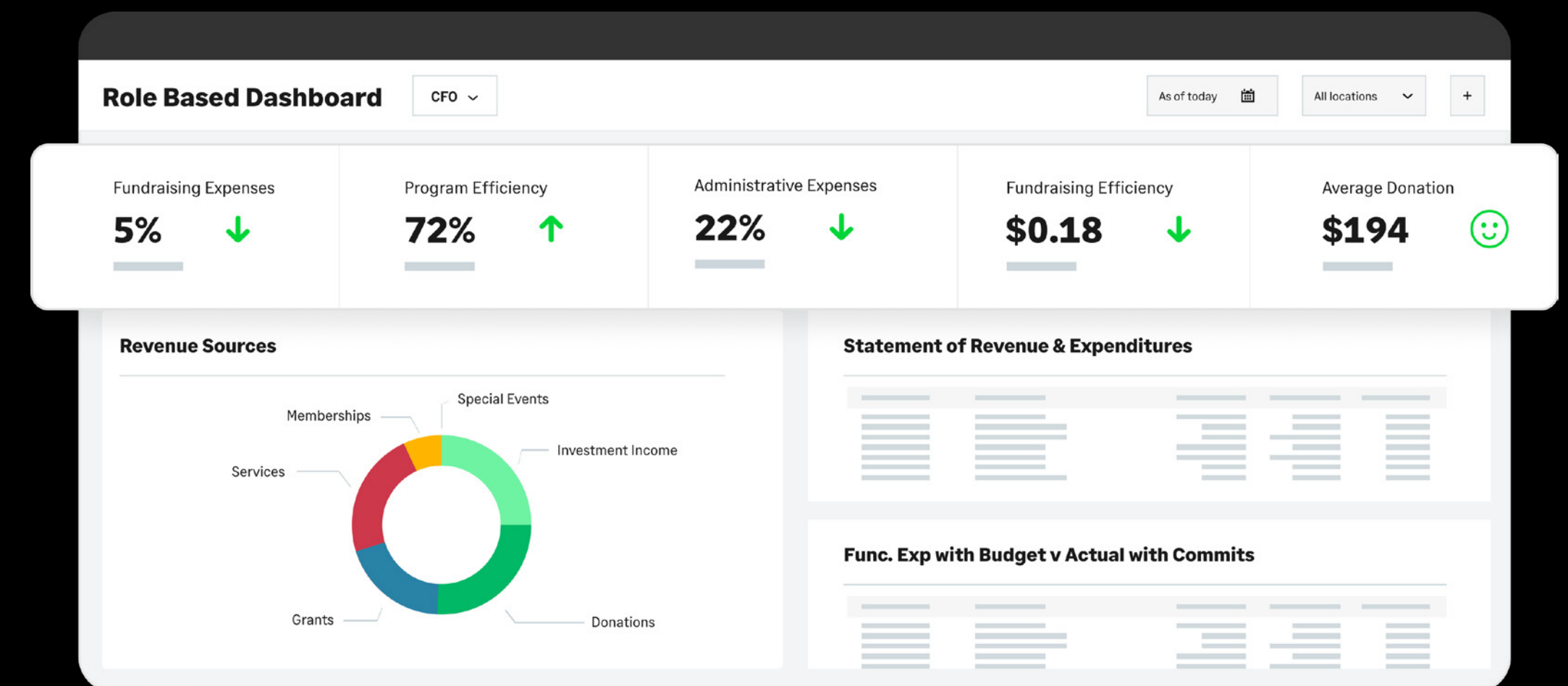
Sage's open API seamlessly integrates business applications, eliminating redundant data entry and manual reporting. This not only saves time but also empowers finance leaders to leverage integrated data for deeper strategic insights and decision-making that drives mission success.



Real-time dashboards provide instant visibility into mission performance

After all your data is integrated, view key metrics from each application in real-time on a dashboard.

With Sage Intacct, finance leaders can leverage real-time visibility through intuitive dashboards, moving beyond reactive decision-making. These dashboards provide actionable insights by displaying key metrics in real-time, helping leaders proactively guide their organizations and ensure decisions are aligned with long-term growth and success.



Atlas Network uses integration to liberate finance teams from manual work

“

QuickBooks and Salesforce didn't talk to each other, and that was definitely an issue. It required a lot of double entry just to keep things synchronized. With Sage Intacct, we no longer have to do monthly reconciliations between what is in Salesforce and what is in QuickBooks. That's saved a lot of time, and it provides a single source of truth with consistent and accurate information in both Salesforce and Sage Intacct.”

Romulo Lopez,
Director of Finance, Atlas Network



Data-driven nonprofit finance leaders **drive greater mission impact**

Using Sage Intacct, nonprofit finance leaders were able to free up time to be more strategic and make impactful decisions. Here are some ways their organizations benefitted.

Tactical

- 60% faster time-to-close
- 78% faster stakeholder reporting
- Board book in minutes
- Real-time access to financials

Strategic

- 40% increase in donor or client base
- 20% growth in new grant funds
- Millions increase in cash flow
- 35%-75% efficiency increase benefiting programs



Conclusion

Take the lead in financial leadership 4.0

The pace of evolution in technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and analytics is quickly accelerating.

The efficiencies of real-time financial leadership are here today. How much time could you save with real-time month-end close, no-code reports, visuals, consolidations, and board books? How much more productive can your team be with fluid integrations across sales, payroll, and hundreds of other apps?

Sage Intacct delivers financial leadership 4.0. Nonprofits enjoy:

- **Real-time month-end close** saves your team from inefficient ebbs and flows.
- **No-code reports, visuals, and board books** drive quick insights and always-ready presentations.
- **Rapid integrations** unify your process and eliminate data entry and mistakes.
- **AI error detection** automatically spots missteps before they can cause damage.



Sage Intacct makes it easier to carve out executive time for focused strategic analysis. With a single source of truth and better visibility across the organization, you'll be well positioned to take advantage of financial leadership 4.0.

About Sage Intacct

Sage delivers market-leading cloud financial management software that helps nonprofits knock down barriers and expand their impact. Trusted by thousands of nonprofits as the preferred financial application—Sage Intacct streamlines fund, grant, and project accounting while delivering real-time visibility into the metrics that matter.

Customers leverage our modern integration tools and visual insights to connect their systems, make better decisions, and automate routine tasks. At Sage, we understand the unique needs of nonprofits to help them grow—which is why we're #1 in customer satisfaction on G2.





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