



TOGETHER WHILE APART

2020/2021 IMPACT REPORT



Institute for
Advancements in
Mental Health







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HERE FOR YOU, BECAUSE OF YOU

Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with some incredible challenges and some equally incredible opportunities to learn and grow. **It has proven why organizations like IAM need to exist.**

As the pandemic began and Canadians were placed under the first wave of lockdowns, there was an immediate increase in individuals experiencing mental health challenges. All of us in one way or another felt the stress, anxiety and uncertainty brought on by the pandemic. IAM also experienced firsthand the increase in the number of individuals experiencing addictions issues and mental illness.

In addition to the challenges facing individuals living with a mental illness, lockdowns, isolation and pandemic fear put an increased demand on services and an even greater demand on caregivers.

In an effort to combat COVID-19, we saw many businesses shut down and others adopting a work-from-home model. For many, this meant a suspension of services and activities.

In fact, many mental health services were closed as resources were redeployed or services could not be maintained during the pandemic due to a lack of resources. However, **IAM did not lose one day of service to clients.** Rather, we acted quickly to adapt our approach to service and became a fully accessible place where people could turn to for help.

IAM started by moving in-person appointments to phone calls and answering client requests by both phone and online platforms. Our frontline service providers began conducting proactive “check-ins” with our clients. We also expanded our service hours to accommodate the increased need for support. We adapted our programming to address new and societal realities, teaching coping strategies to maintain or recover mental wellness for both individuals and caregivers.

We could not have done what we did without your support. We are fortunate to have the support of incredible individual and family donors who believe strongly in IAM's mission. **We are here for you and because of you.** To our government, corporate and foundation partners, we are grateful for your dedication to our cause. We are also thankful for our caregivers and clients who we continue to learn from so we can better serve our community.

IAM is grateful to everyone who gave their time this year, particularly our Board of Directors, who provided their expertise, guidance, and support throughout the pandemic. They played a critical role in guiding and supporting our direction in a pandemic environment which allowed us to continue serving individuals, families, and caregivers. Our board was successful in developing our new strategic plan in the midst of the pandemic, setting the course for addressing the future of mental health as we recover and ensuring IAM will contribute solutions to the mental health issues we will face. Their skill and commitment to the cause ensure IAM is listening and responding to the mental health needs of Canadians and, in particular, the unmet needs of Canadians.

We owe a big thank you to our staff for their dedication, support and agility to respond quickly. Our team rose to the occasion, providing frontline support to thousands of people all while navigating the complexities of this new normal. Without our staff, IAM could not have provided the seamless care that we did.

With a new world ahead of us, IAM will continue to **provide and expand** needed support to individuals and family caregivers and build our counselling and education programs. We will also lead collaboration with our partners to develop solutions to unmet mental health needs while working to define what social inclusion for those impacted by mental illness means and take action. Finally, IAM will continue to be a **strong and tireless voice** for those we serve to build an inclusive society free from stigma.



Chris Damaren
Board Chair

A handwritten signature of Chris Damaren in black ink.



Mary Alberti
CEO

A handwritten signature of Mary Alberti in black ink.

OUR STORY

WHO WE ARE

The Institute for Advancements in Mental Health (IAM) is a connector, collaborator, thought leader and solution-driven organization, supporting, innovating and driving change for better mental health.

IAM innovates in mental health with a focus on returning solutions back to communities, through partnership and collaboration.

Through our own in-house services we design programs and services that are centred around the needs of and in collaboration with our clients - *people with complex mental health needs and their support circles*.

Our unique, first-of-its-kind community-based mental health innovation platform is a designated space for mental health innovation entrenched within a mental health service organization.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

At IAM, we envision a society that is inclusive and responsive to everyone impacted by mental health issues to let them thrive. We call this vision **redesigning society for better mental health**. Creating environments that are more inclusive, positive and accepting for people with mental illness is central to our work and our services.

WHAT WE BELIEVE IN:

IMPACT



We listen to what people need so that together, we can deliver real solutions for real lives.

INTEGRITY



We work for better mental health with unwavering candor, compassion, and respect, always.

INNOVATION



We question what's not working and move fast to create meaningful change.

PARTNERSHIP



We believe that we are better together, not alone.

BY THE NUMBERS



WEBSITE:

Our new website saw over **57,000** pageviews



SCHOLARSHIPS:

We supported **25** students living with or impacted by mental illness to pursue their education with \$37,500 in scholarships



SUPPORT SERVICES:

We reached **3,842** people through our support line and educational presentations/groups and community events



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION:

- 3 Active Innovation Projects:
- Supporting individuals with their physician appointments
 - Mental health prize challenge to help prevent youth suicide
 - CBT & RIA evaluations



\$43K+
RAISED DURING OUR
FIRST VIRTUAL
HOLE OUT FOR HOPE!



SUPPORT FROM AFAR

In early 2020, the world was greatly impacted by COVID-19. Businesses in all sectors were urged to shut down, and employees were expected to adapt to a new normal and work from home. Unfortunately, for many organizations, this resulted in halting essential services and activities. But IAM did not lose one day of service to clients. We quickly adapted our approach to ensure a seamless transition during difficult times.

Our team of frontline service providers immediately began outreach to all our clients to conduct proactive “check-ins”. Service hours were expanded to accommodate increased needs for support.



“Mental health recovery throughout the pandemic has had its challenges [...] due to barriers to accessing [...] technology. [...] It has been inspiring to see informal support groups being developed, both by individuals with lived experience and family members. This really highlights the importance of connection and self-determination in mental health recovery [...].

– Alyssa Hirji, IAM frontline worker

Taking an all-hands-on-deck approach, staff from across the agency provided administrative support to our frontline services, reaching out to other community services to offer information and assistance. Staff acted quickly to build our capacity to deliver services virtually. This included sourcing videoconferencing software that complied with privacy legislation, adapting consent and intake forms, program materials and seeking funding to offset these unanticipated new costs.


Program content was revised to address new health and social realities and teach coping strategies to maintain or recover mental wellness during the pandemic. Measures were put in place to support client and staff use of virtual tools, including:

Job training and aids for frontline staff

Additional information for clients to optimize their virtual experience

Set up/sign-in support

We began to increase our services with new group programming designed for caregivers of individuals with mental illness and frontline workers.



To support our transition, we relied on years of trusted relationships with clients who are confident in our frontline staff and comfortable in our spaces. We conducted detailed work, checking in with them regularly, proactively, and walking them through this period of change. As we began to understand readiness for change and the growing challenges with privacy and personal time during this period, we were able to adapt and have remained agile during a time when uncertainty and change are persistent.

As we, along with all Canadians, move forward through the pandemic and into recovery we must bring together our many strengths and look to the future of mental health in Canada. Ongoing examination of this changing landscape will enable us to co-design a set of response strategies for future mental health challenges.

"It's nice to have someone on the other end of the line because I've made a lot of calls to places and I don't always hear back."
- IAM Caregiver

We encourage the support of those with unique perspectives and insights, and all those with a vested interest in mental health to come together with us as we move to create a more positive future for all Canadians.

It is our hope that there will be at least one positive outcome from the pandemic: That COVID-19 will serve as a wake-up call that mental health is critical to creating and sustaining a thriving society.

We will continue to work closely with partners in the mental health space, as well as stakeholders outside the mental health sector, to collaborate on innovative new approaches to mental wellness and build resiliency. We continue to lean in on the learnings of our frontline staff, our communities, and listen to the needs of our clients and problem solve with them to create the tools we need to navigate our new world and provide care to our clients experiencing complex mental health challenges.

As we experience all of this change, there are countless lessons we are learning, shaping the way we respond to mental illness, support our communities and seek to drive change for better mental health.

CAREGIVER SUPPORT

When someone is living with mental illness, it is often a family member or friend who acts as their caregiver, working within a system that can feel despairingly difficult to navigate especially while feeling emotionally or physically depleted. Caring for those with mental illness is essential, but it is as important to build a caregiver's resilience and knowledge.

Call volumes to IAM's counselling support line increased by almost five times at the outset of the pandemic and 60% of those calls were from families. The nature and frequency of calls also shifted to signal dramatic increases in caregiver burnout and the urgency of self-care.

To date, IAM has met the associated cost of a 606% increase in participation in our caregiver education groups. Yet, growing waitlists are worrying evidence of unmet needs. Beyond those waiting for IAM support, there are also families who are unaware that help exists.

We developed new program materials addressing life changes, uncertainties and coping skills during the pandemic. Using new virtual technology, the program team was able to reach clients in the northern region and other parts of Ontario. With the support of mental health services in the northern region of the province, we developed a customized Strengthening Families Together group to provide this service to Indigenous families.



**"AS CAREGIVERS, WE
SOMETIMES FEEL LIKE
FORGOTTEN PEOPLE. IT IS
ESSENTIAL TO FIND
AVENUES OF SUPPORT
THAT HELP US FEEL SEEN
AND REMEMBERED"**

- IAM CAREGIVER

As a result of our active response to the pandemic, and our ability to increase services to meet the increased demand, we are proud that we have continued to grow the number of people we are able to serve. IAM is committed to providing ongoing support to those living with and affected by mental illness on our mission to create a society for better mental health.



A MESSAGE FROM A SUPPORTER

As a caregiver – and a father – all you want to do is make a valuable difference to the well-being of that precious child who is relying on you.

It's gut-wrenching not to know how to do that.

I looked for help for years, and while never wanting to give up, I was at my wit's end.

Then I found IAM.

Having access to an experienced IAM counsellor means that suddenly you are not alone. You not only have a plan for your child but you also, once again, have hope.

- IAM Supporter & Caregiver

IAM WORKS TOGETHER

IAM innovates in mental health with a focus on returning solutions back to communities, through partnerships and collaborations. Here are some of our most recent partnerships and collaborations that we had impact on:

Mental Health and Addictions COVID Response Table



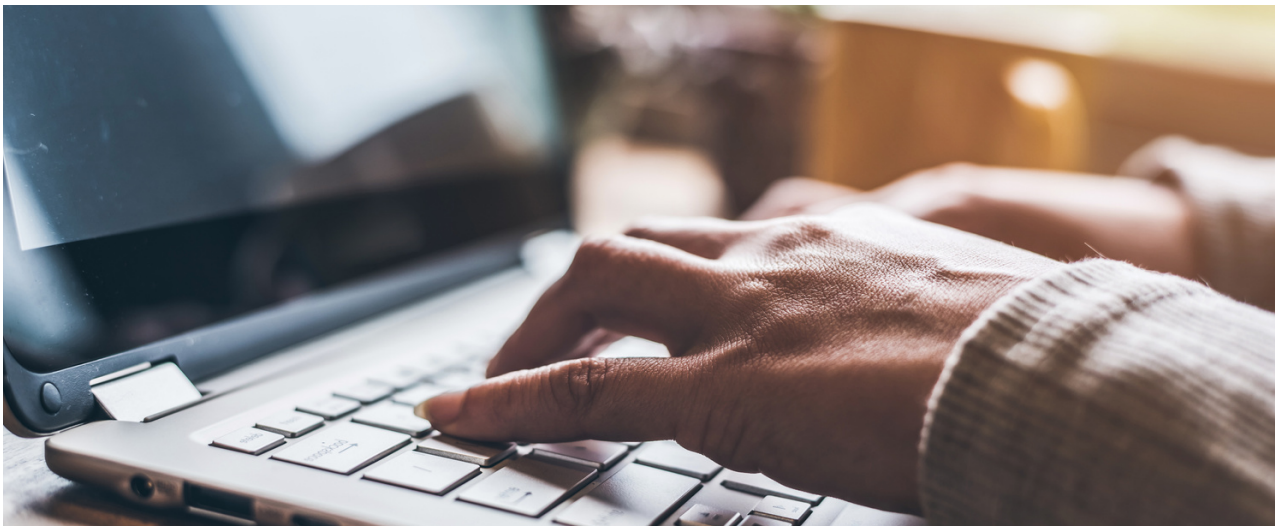
IAM continues to experience a strong, positive relationship with the **Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence**, demonstrated through regular meetings with senior leadership and an invitation to sit at the Mental Health and Addictions COVID Response Table.



Empowering Community Minds (ECM) - A new community mental health collaborative - convened by IAM - brings together Community Family Services of Ontario, Ontario Peer Development Initiative, Hope + Me - Mood Disorders Association of Ontario, Fred Victor and the Ontario Brain Injury Association.

Sparked in response to the pandemic but sustained by a shared passion for people, the collaborative works to provide a continuum of services to improve the lives of individuals and families impacted by mental health challenges, and those who are facing distress as a result of COVID-19.

Membership in Research Canada



We joined **Research Canada** to expand IAM's reach to federal parliamentarians and bureaucrats to increase awareness of who we are and our work. It connects us with researchers and innovators across Canada and opens the door for new partnerships.

INNOVATION

We're taking a human-centred approach, starting with the insights of the people we serve, listening, and understanding what it is they need and want from us. Through design thinking we try to understand the experience of people living with mental illness, as well as their support networks, and create solutions to the everyday challenges that impact them.

PATIENT TOOLKIT



In 2019, IAM received funding to explore and find solutions to the problem statement: **“How might we improve the experience of an individual with mental illness at follow-up appointments with their physician?”**

Aligning with our human-centred approach to problem-solving, our multidisciplinary project team listened to a range of voices and stories, and worked to unpack some of these challenges, or “pain points”.

Ultimately, individuals living with psychosis saw value in having a physical collection of information and resources to help them work through appointment-related anxieties - **namely, a toolkit.**



Our first iteration of the toolkit, grounded in cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), is designed to ease the experience of individuals through tools such as mood trackers and journals. With the first phase completed, IAM has now secured additional funding to build out the resource in 2021 and to pilot it in communities, ultimately scaling its availability to individuals and families across Canada.



The Future of Mental Health

A Strategic Foresight Study



OCAD U CO

To plan for the future, we need to understand the future.

In the wake of COVID-19, while we were contemplating how to support people in the here and now, our minds were already considering what the world might look like post-pandemic. The problem is this pandemic is largely unprecedented, and our conventional ways of problem-solving have not been tested against a challenge of this scale.

Mental health issues, for example, continue to show up in greater numbers and in different ways, whether at home or in public spaces. This is also having an effect on how we define who our frontline workers are.

Instead of guessing how things will unfold, we need to challenge our assumptions and work backwards from the future. To do this, IAM is leading a national initiative using the practice of “futures” thinking.

Futures thinking is a research-driven discipline that offers us specialized thinking for a crisis like ours. By looking five to ten years down the road, we can better prepare for things we do and don't understand about this pandemic.

In January 2021, working with the futures expertise at OCAD U CO, the executive innovation studio of OCAD University, IAM brought together a diverse range of mental health partners across Canada - from corporate to community partners, from pharma to people with lived experience. Together, we developed possible futures that we could plan around, and ultimately co-developed a report that was gifted back to our system partners in Summer 2021.

We plan on working through the opportunities of this report, especially around the “calls to action” pieces that will help us inform and make system-wide changes. To do this work, we want to bring together a working group of other like-minded partners who see the value in this work and the need to create change now.

A post-pandemic world will see the rolling effects of this crisis for years to come, and IAM is taking leadership to both plan and prepare for those now.

OUR ADVOCACY

We continue our efforts to influence government to support expanded services for those living with and affected by mental illness. However, unlike in previous years where our advocacy has seen a greater impact, we had to shift our focus to continuity of care for those we serve. At the same time, governments' focus turned almost entirely to pandemic response, making any interactions significantly limited in scope.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, our steadfast efforts resulted in:

- **Giving voice to community mental health and the impact COVID had on the sector and for smaller organizations like IAM and how we needed to quickly adapt and modify our services.**
- **Sustained services with no changes to government funding.**
- **An invitation to sit at the Mental Health & Addictions Centre of Excellence's (CoE) COVID Pandemic Response Table, comprised of CoE leadership, the associate minister of mental health and addictions and sector leaders.**



We secured an audience with the **director general, health programs and strategic initiatives, strategic policy branch at the department of health** as we move to execute our organizational advocacy strategy to heighten our profile at the federal level.

We will continue our government relations efforts to effect change and help create a society for better mental health.

GROWING SUPPORT



We are proud to announce that there is a growing interest among corporate partners in **IAM's model of collaboration.**

We are inviting pharmaceutical and insurance companies, for example, to sit with families and people living with mental illness. Other community partners have also appreciated this model which supports horizontal cooperation and information sharing across industries/sectors.

Among corporations, like pharmaceutical, there is also interest in our design approach, in mapping the experience and journey of individuals to highlight opportunities for change and improvement to a range of problems.

Other corporate partners have taken an interest in our innovation work in general as a way to address some of the mental health problems such as our patient toolkit.

EVENTS AND FUNDRAISERS

HOLE OUT FOR HOPE

On June 18th, IAM held its first virtual Hole Out for Hope golf tournament. Our 2020 goal was to raise \$25,000. We raised **over \$43,000!**

Thank you to our dedicated golf committee for participating in this virtual event: **Fred Howe, Craig Sindrey and Terry Doyle.**



FEDERATED HEALTH CHARITIES

The Federated Health Charities Corporation is a coalition of provincially-based charities in Ontario raising funds for its members within the Ontario Public Service that will support health education and awareness, medical research, and client and patient services.

The Federated Health Charities Campaign is a workplace charitable campaign that allows members of the Ontario Public Service (OPS) across Ontario to support up to 21 health charities through payroll deductions, donations and special events.

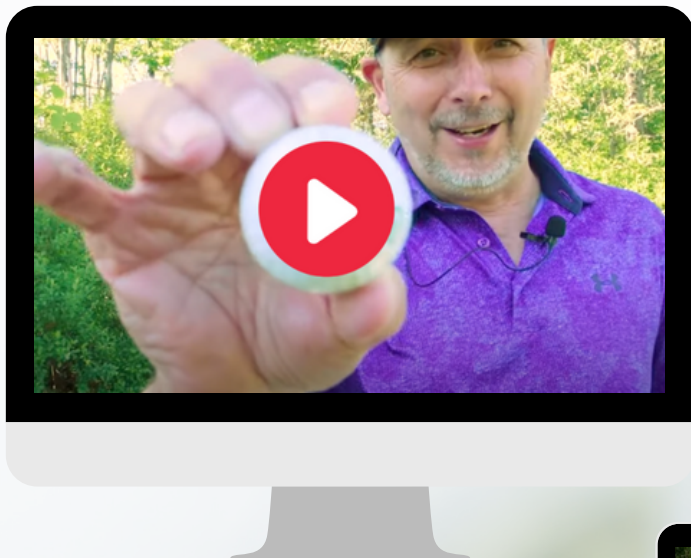
IAM is grateful for the ongoing financial support of Federated Health Charities and the OPS. Through Federated Health Charities, we raised **over \$68,000** in 2020!

GIVING TUESDAY

On December 1st, IAM celebrated Giving Tuesday by collaborating with Canadian influencers. Giving Tuesday is a global giving movement, taking place each year after Black Friday. This year, we highlighted the unsung heroes of mental health care - caregivers.

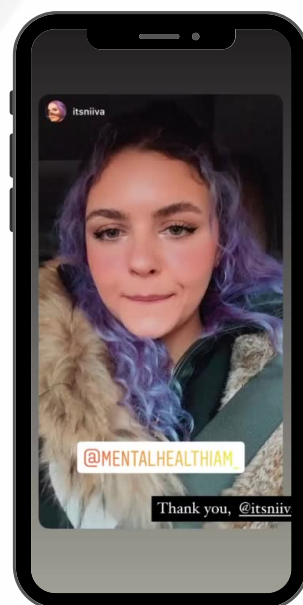
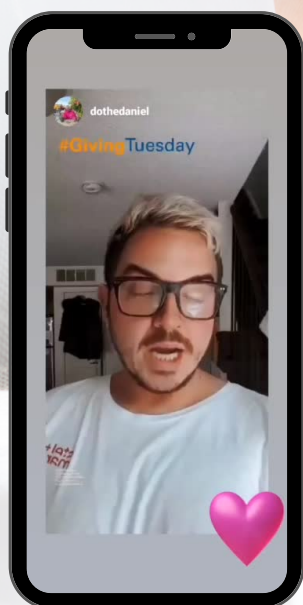
Influencers across the country shared personal stories and prompted their followers to learn more about IAM's services and resources.

**GIVING
TUESDAY**



**HOLE OUT
FOR HOPE**

**GIVING
TUESDAY**



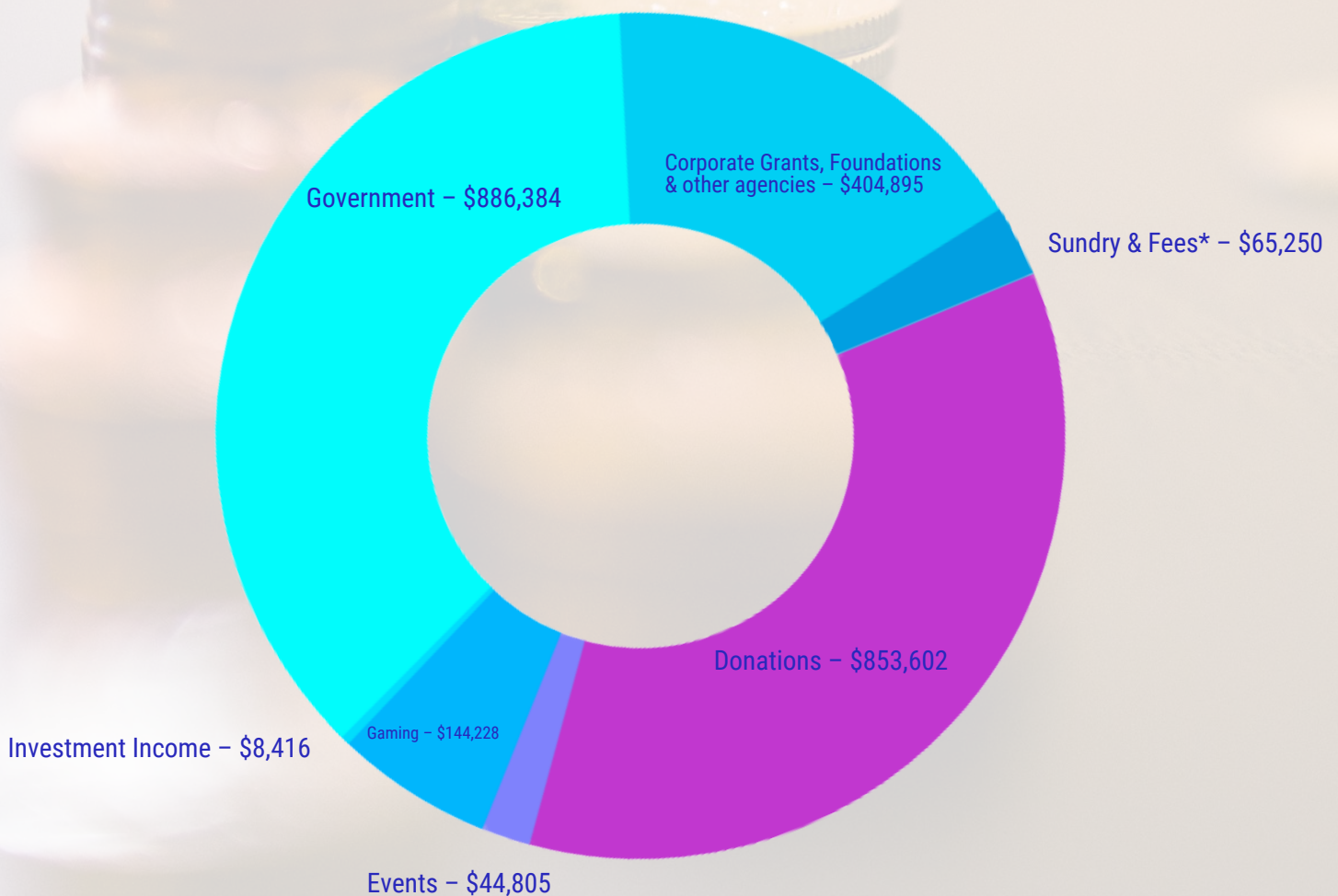
FINANCIALS

WHERE OUR MONEY COMES FROM

"IAM excels at providing critical services to those suffering from psychosis and schizophrenia and to their caregivers, at a time of greatly increased demand. It accomplishes this through a variety of channels, including the Ask Expert counselling service; excellent workshops for family caregivers; and a first-class scholarship program for college and university students.

In the wake of COVID-19, IAM is also looking ahead, as shown by its recent, timely co-sponsored (with OCAD U CO) report *The Future of Mental Health: A Strategic Foresight Study*, which imagines mental health scenarios and their implications ten years from now."

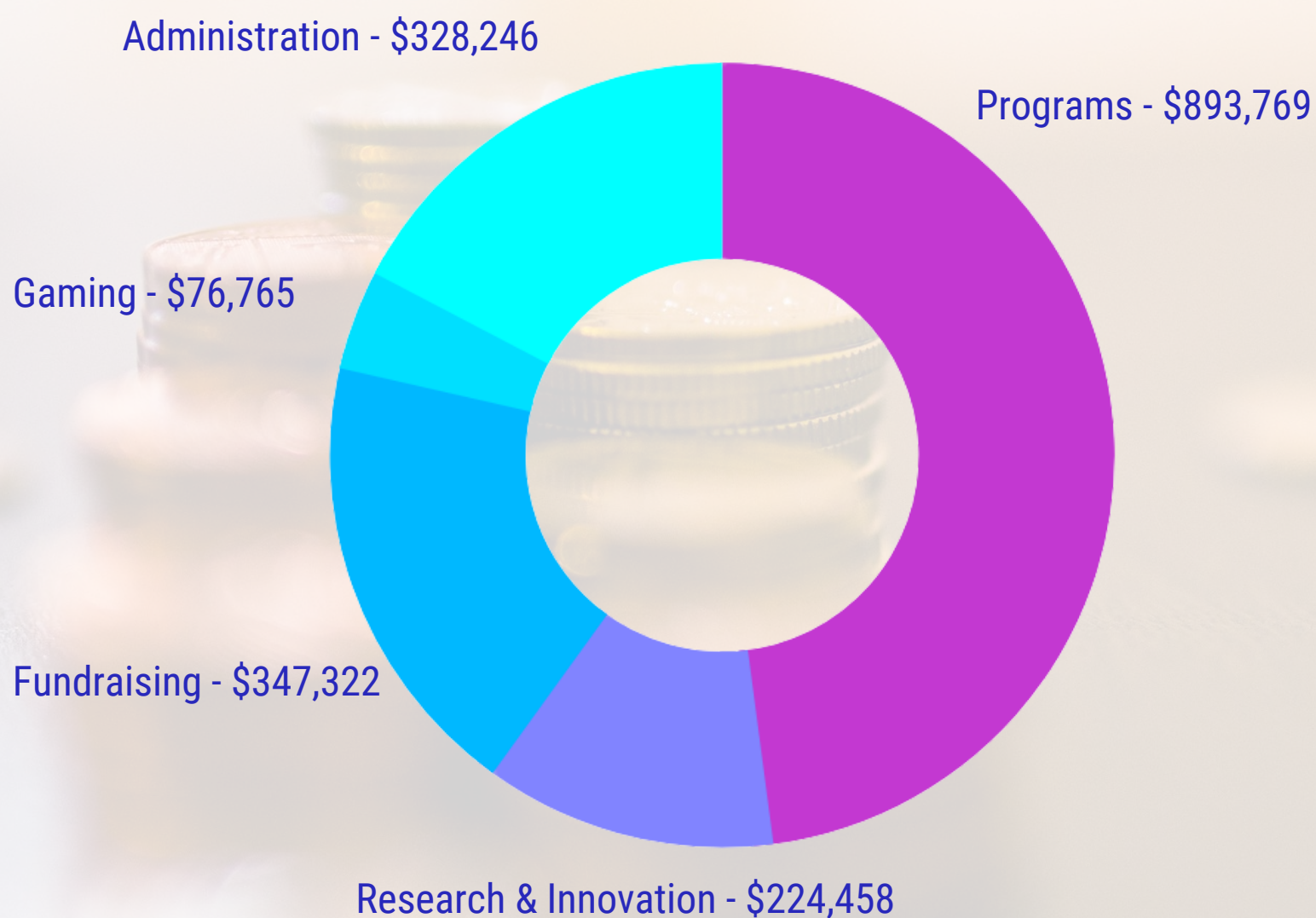
- Douglas Goold PhD, IAM Supporter



TOTAL: \$2,408,203

*Represents Fee for Service as well as Sundry

WHERE OUR MONEY GOES



TOTAL: \$1,870,560

Please note that some donations received in fiscal year 2021 are designated for fiscal year 2022.
Our 2020-21 Audited Financial Statement is available upon request.

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To-Ching Yeung

**THANK YOU
TO OUR GENEROUS
DONORS!**

DONATIONS OF \$100 OR MORE MADE
FROM APRIL 1, 2020 TO MARCH 31, 2021

**THANK YOU
TO OUR GENEROUS
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FOUNDATION, AND
GOVERNMENT
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Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health
Integration Network
Ministry of Health
Ontario Health
Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network



Please note that some donations received in fiscal year 2021 are designated for fiscal year 2022.

WE THANK YOU
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT TO CREATE
A SOCIETY FOR
BETTER MENTAL HEALTH



Institute for
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Mental Health