

EMPOWER

Providing children, teens,
and young adults relief from grief,
and guiding them through life after the
death of a parent.

Business Plan Summary



THE PROBLEM & THE IMPACT

1 in 11 children (6 million) in the United States will experience the death of a parent by age 18. That number more than doubles to 14 million by age 25. Research shows that bereaved children and young adults are at an increased risk of disrupted development. Unless support is provided, lifelong complications persist, including higher rates of anxiety, depression, substance use disorder, job loss, and early mortality.

THE PROBLEM

- 93% of grieving children report feeling “significant isolation” at a developmental age when they need connection and nurturing.
- Bereaved youth have a 75% graduation rate, less than the national average, and are 3 times more likely to be imprisoned.
- Bereaved youth are 27% more likely to become addicted or abuse alcohol and drugs and have a higher incident rate of short and long-term mental health issues, including disruptive behavior disorders.
- In a study of teachers with students who have experienced the loss of a parent, 87% report children having difficulty concentrating in class, 82% report withdrawal and absenteeism, and 68% report a significant decline in academic performance.

THE IMPACT

- Program participants are more likely to graduate from high school and college (100% of our program participants graduate from high school and 90% from college).
- 81% of Empower participants are more likely to regularly participate in extracurricular activities.
- Empower participants are 78% more likely to volunteer in their communities.
- Empower participants are more than twice as likely to hold leadership positions in clubs or sports teams.
- By dealing constructively with loss, a child is able to pursue pro-social activities and interests that lead to greater health and well-being.

OUR PURPOSE: WE ARE WITNESSES AND GUIDES

From the moment a parent dies, children are thrust into a new reality – one many people don't want to talk about. While people may feel great empathy, they often don't know what to do or say, and often avoid talking to the child about their loss.

Even close friends treat children differently, leaving kids to have this “other” feeling, like nobody sees or hears them.

Without support, dysfunction creeps in, and their future can literally hang in the balance. If they gain resilience and confidence they can thrive, but if not, their future is at stake.

We are the guides and the witnesses, and help children and young adults learn how to navigate this new life they unwittingly find themselves in. We help them to learn how to deal with the grief constructively, and as it comes.

These children have the best possible chance to reach their potential.

OUR SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

Empower is community, not counseling. Our work is built upon proven science that shows people learn best from someone ahead of them on their grief journey.

Our work has two pillars:

Relief from Grief (EVENTS)

Events mitigate isolation, help form a supportive community and connect children to others who can relate, reminding them they are not alone in their grief.

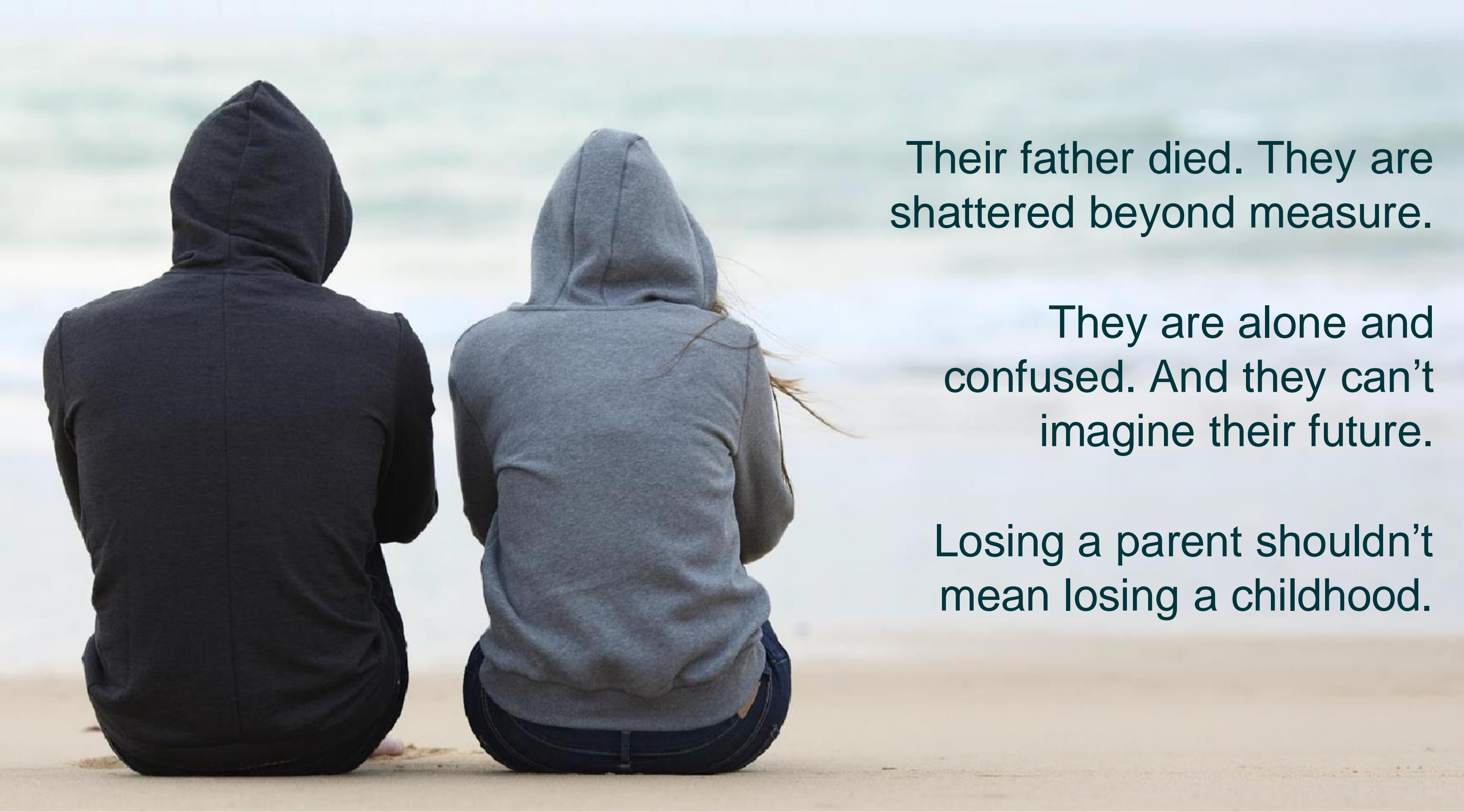
Events take place year-round and also on potentially difficult days, like Mother's and Father's Day.

Building a Life after Loss (Mentor Program)

Mentoring provides support at key inflection points along the grief journey.

Our role models, who have lived experience, help guide children through the new world of grief and provide opportunities for healing and growth for both the child and the Mentor.

OUR “WHY”



Their father died. They are shattered beyond measure.

They are alone and confused. And they can't imagine their future.

Losing a parent shouldn't mean losing a childhood.

THE BUSINESS PLAN SUMMARY

OUR PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Empower will remain a volunteer-driven, non-therapeutic and community-based nonprofit organization and programs will remain at no charge to the family. We commit to:

- Honor all those who have endured the tragic loss of a parent or primary caregiver.
- Be present with grief, without judgement.
- Focus all processes on intentionality and quality - then on scaling.
- Prioritize quality processes that lead to quality results, with the child's safety as top priority.
- Operate with transparency and accountability.
- Remain a test-and-learn organization, never making assumptions based on our personal experience.
- Drive program expansion through strategic collaboration and relationships with all stakeholders.
- Ensure race, gender, ability, and socio-economic status do not influence program.
- Make time for our own grief and support each other in the process.
- Run our nonprofit like hungry entrepreneurs.

OUR VISION

We have a clear vision for growth and a nuanced understanding of the market, and the time is now to scale programs. We have a proven model for successful programs that will remain free of charge to the family, and volunteer-driven, community-based, and non-therapeutic.

We will realize our vision to:

1. Become the most prominent community-based grief support organization across the country.
2. Consolidate operations at HQ and leverage technology to enhance our program and operate more efficiently.
3. Dramatically expand the number of children served.
4. Leverage our expertise with two populations very few other grief organizations serve: teenagers and young adults.
5. Create a more sophisticated referral network by leveraging partnerships with community organizations.

OUR GOALS & OBJECTIVES [2 Years]

To meet the demand for our programs, and remove children from our wait list, we developed a Board approved, comprehensive \$5 million strategic business plan that calls for the following goals and objectives over the next 2 years:

PROGRAM

Grow the # of Mentors from 5,000 to 15,000 by 2026

- Based on positive feedback, host more frequent, small and large-scale get togethers to build community and mitigate isolation (i.e. beach days, yoga events, golf outings, rock climbing, and other events aimed at their interests).
- Aggressively promote the Mentor Hybrid Program adoption. Through this program, the Mentor & Mentee spend quality time together 4-6 times over the course of a year (vs. 12x per year), providing more flexibility to both the family and Mentor and enabling us to remove children and Mentors from our waiting list.
- Streamline the Mentor Program and provide funds to Mentors to offset out of pocket costs.

Grow the # of program participants from 750 to 3,500 by 2026

- Create a more sophisticated referral network by leveraging partnerships with community organizations.
- Continue to strengthen the mentor program and maintain elite status as the only Mentor program in the world for bereaved children.
- Host a series of discussions for volunteers to provide continuing education about grief and loss.
- Contract with clinicians, grief experts, and risk management advisors to conduct independent reviews of all programs.

OUR GOALS & OBJECTIVES [2 Years] Continued

FUNDRAISING

Raise \$5 million of which \$3 million funds full implementation of the business plan over two years.

- Invest \$2 million to seed accelerated scaling in the out-years, as well as technology and research.
- Strengthen the major gifts program while introducing planned giving and a grants program.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Re-align staff roles and business processes at Headquarters.

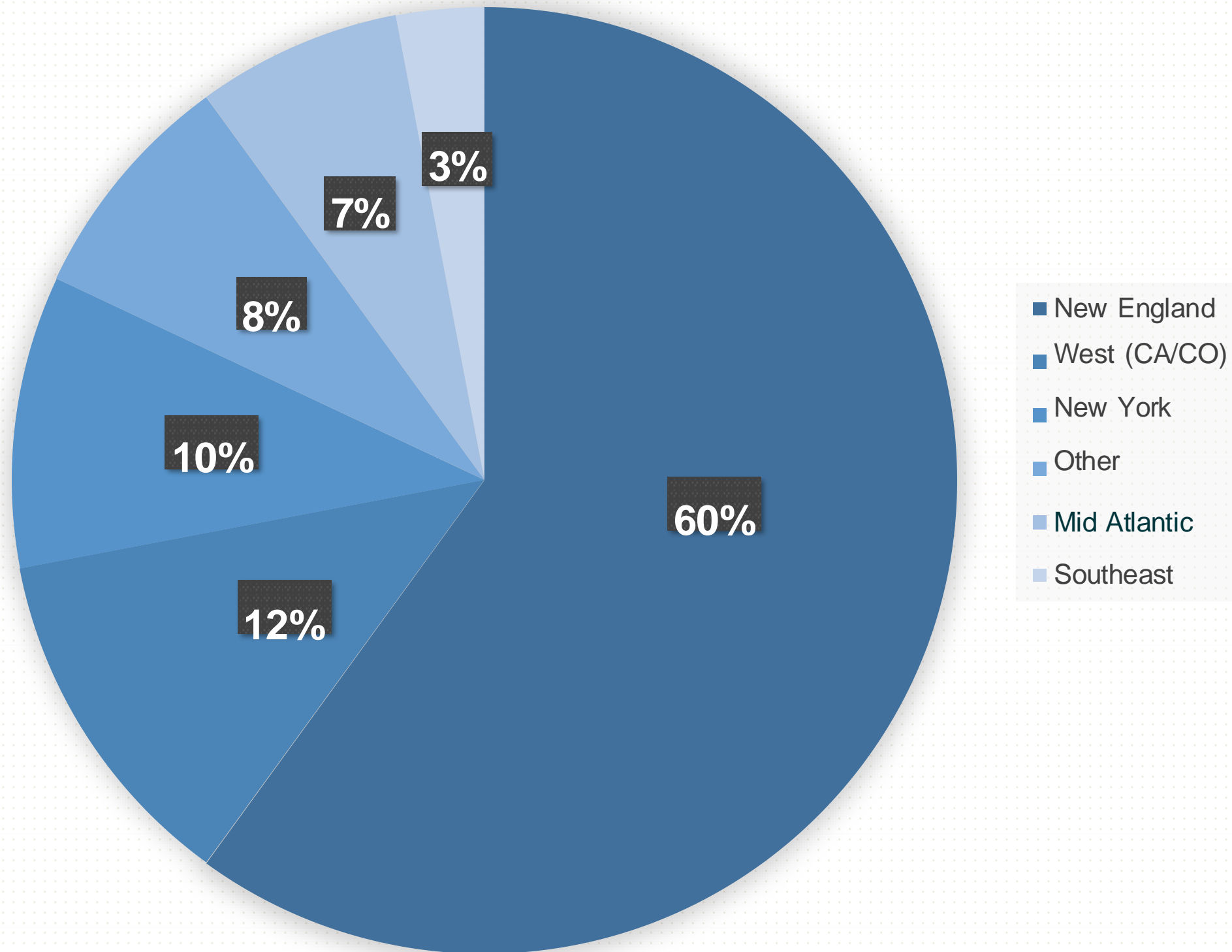
- Consolidate several part-time positions into full-time positions, enabling greater accountability and productivity.

TECHNOLOGY

Fund technology to build a phone-based app and grow the event series while offering more autonomy to the family during the Mentor match process.

- Leverage technology and compress the sales cycle for mentor recruitment and match process.

THE MARKET



There are 6 million grieving children nationwide, and 425,000 in the communities we serve.

These children are supported by 22 nonprofits with budgets of \$250,000+. The total annual spend for these nonprofits is \$29.6 million.

While we serve children nationwide, we are strongest in the following regions: New England, West Coast, New York Metropolitan, Mid-Atlantic, South Florida, Chicagoland and North Carolina.

FUNDING NEEDS



Mentor Program \$1 Million

Growing from 5,000 to 15,000 Mentors over two years, and building staffing, volunteer ranks, program management and all associated costs, including marketing, risk mitigation, bi-annual research and annual safety audits.



Events \$250,000

Hold Host 4 get togethers in each region we serve every year for five years. Increase the number of Mentor applicants from an events funnel.



Technology \$500,000

Fund the technology and build a phone-based app to grow the event series and give more autonomy to the family during the Mentor match process

OUR CORE TEAM



Cara Belvin, Founder

Cara is an energetic and visionary leader who has expanded Empower from a local grassroots movement to an international nonprofit. Inspired by the loss of her mother when she was nine years old, Cara formed Empower to build community for children of any parent loss. Cara began her career as a School Psychologist before transitioning her career into nonprofit management and social entrepreneurship.

Cara frequently speaks on issues surrounding adversity, women's empowerment, and social entrepreneurship. Cara's efforts have been featured on CNN, The Today Show, ABC, PBS NewsHour with Judy Woodruff, and more.



Jeff Kimball, Executive Director

An expert in branding, fundraising, and scaling nonprofits, Jeff began his career in the US Senate where he served as a deputy press secretary for then-Senator Joe Biden, and later for Senator John D. (Jay) Rockefeller IV. Jeff most recently served as the founding staff member and Group President of Elizabeth's Smile, funding groundbreaking research into the status of childhood grief, and developed a series of research-backed guides to help people understand how to best support grieving children.

Having experienced the death of his wife, and while raising his 2 beautiful daughters Lexi & Elyse, Jeff has turned his lived experience into a catalyst for change serving a number of the nation's leading grief-related nonprofits.



Sam Loutzenhiser, VP Operations & Program

Sam is a talented and compassionate professional with over 15 years of extensive experience in the nonprofit sector and youth development.

As one of our first Empower volunteers in 2013 who worked closely with founder Cara Belvin to develop all mission and fundraising initiatives, Sam served as one of the first Mentors in 2015 when the Mentor Program launched.

She is passionate about our mission and longed for an organization like Empower following the loss of her brave, beautiful mother Anne Marie when she was 17 years old.

SIX ADDITIONAL ROLES

We are currently operating with 3 full-time staff and 22 part-time staff. Our plan is to reorganize and hire the following 5 program-related roles to meet the current demand and scale:

Content Generator (\$250K Threshold)

Manage all brand content to include brochures, website, newsletter, social content creation and management, program event communications, and fundraising communications.

Program Managers - East Coast (\$250K Threshold) and West Coast (\$1 Million Threshold)

- Empower will consolidate current part-time positions to two full-time roles. The Program Managers will recruit, screen and train Mentors, and monitor all Mentor matches. The Program Managers will also manage the Intake process for all children and families.

Event Manager (\$500K Threshold)

- Manage all events for children across the US throughout the year, as well as our signature events on Mother's and Father's Day.

Development Manager (\$750K Threshold)

- Manage all fundraising events hosted by Empower, to include sponsorships, corporate donations, crowdfunding, year-end campaigns and grants.

Program and Operations Support (\$1 Million Threshold)

- Program support, including management of the secure database and the implementation of the new technology.

FY '25 BUDGET

Revenue:	\$2,471,000
Expenses:	
Program	\$1,018,000
Salaries & Operations (not allocated to program)	\$213,845
Total Expenses	\$1,215,434

FY '26 BUDGET

Revenue:	\$2,529,000
Expenses:	
Program	\$1,220,275
Salaries & Operations (not allocated to program)	\$343,105
Total Expenses	\$1,563,380

Budget Narrative: The \$5 million campaign reflects the need to fund and build a new organizational structure to accommodate immediate program scaling. 87% of our budget is directed to our program expenses, which includes staff salaries and costs that are directly attributable to that work. The net is 5x more children served at 3x less the cost.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

We currently spend \$1,442 per child in our work. If a child doesn't get our support, society spends \$20,719. Through this plan, the all-in cost per child decreases to \$521.

The Rate of Return for every \$1 invested is 14.37%, reflecting the impact our program dollars have on mitigating the economic impact of inaction.

Empowered

