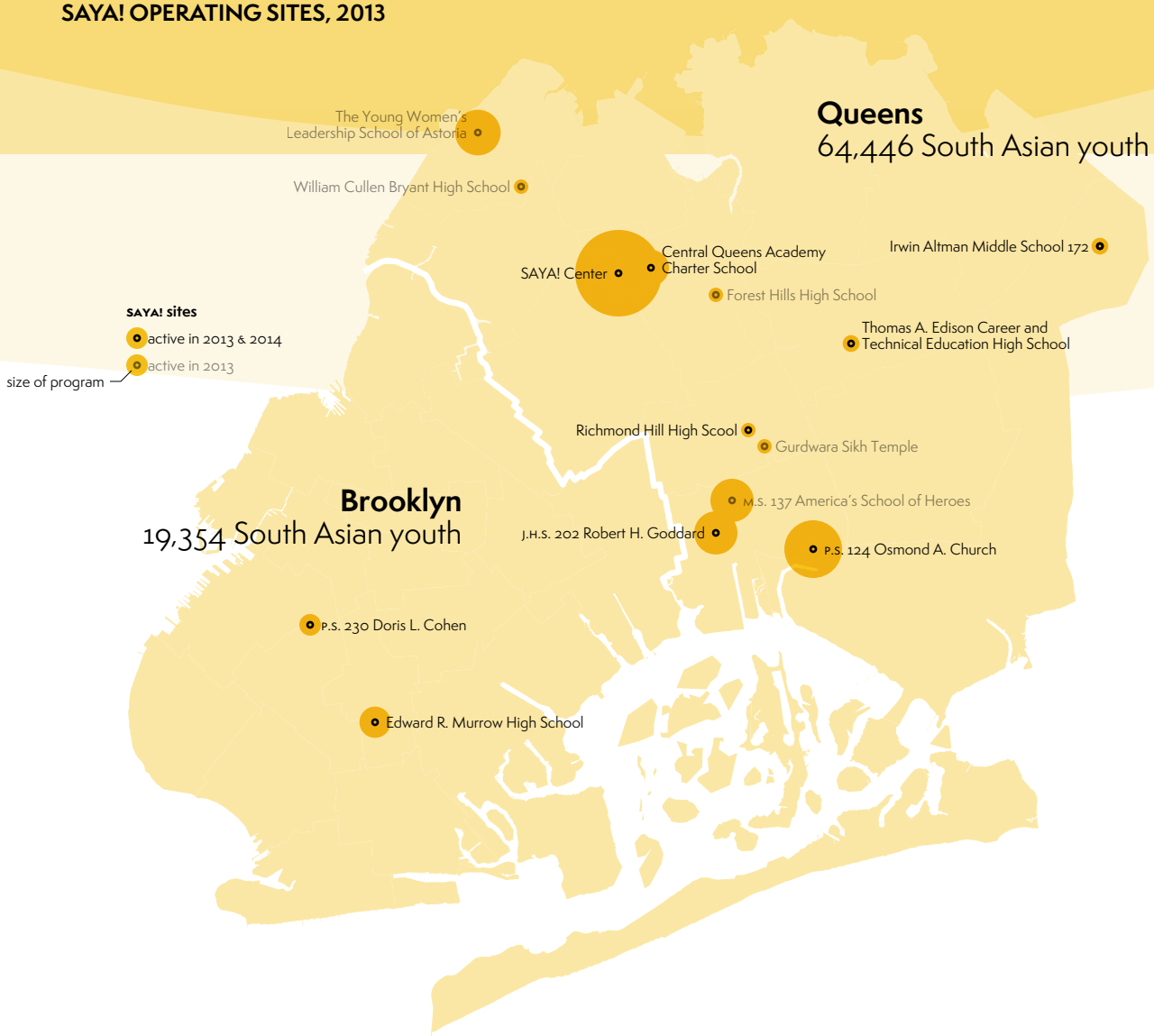
saya!

South Asian Youth Action

ANNUAL REPORT • 2013–2014

SAYA! OPERATING SITES, 2013



MEET SAYA!'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sonia Bhuta joins SAYA! after close to a decade at the Educational Alliance, where she held many roles in program administration, strategic planning, fundraising and communications. As the Director of Education Program Development and Strategy, she led initiatives to support educational and socio-emotional needs of students as they encounter school transitions, from pre-K to college graduation. Earlier, Sonia led the Educational Alliance's college prep programming, including design, implementation, and evaluation. She has worked hands-on with hundreds of youth and families on the high school and college application process.

Sonia earned her Master of Science in Social Work from Columbia University and her Bachelor in Business Administration from the University of Michigan.

Annual Report 2013–2014 *writing* Siddhartha Mitter • *design* H James Lucas
special thanks Chelsea Snow and Nadia Shahzad Khan

A LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

In 1996 SAYA! began with a small program of 15 young women working through challenges of growing up South Asian in New York City. Eighteen years later, SAYA! has grown tremendously. With close to 70 full-time and part-time staff members, we serve 1,800 youth each year, currently at eleven sites. We offer free academic support, college counseling, enrichment, and leadership development programs.

There are now more than 100,000 South Asian youth ages 19 and under in New York City. Over half live in low-income families. SAYA! remains the only secular organization whose mission and services are devoted to the achievement of these South Asian youth.

SAYA! continues to grow and create opportunities for youth to realize their full potential. One recent landmark was our first-ever citywide Desi Girls Conference, held at the New School in May 2014. In bringing together 100 young women for a day of skill-building, career exploration, and bonding, it highlighted the values of our founding program.

This year we proudly saw our outgoing Executive Director, Udai Tambar, appointed New York City's Director of Children and Youth Services. We are very excited to introduce our new Executive Director, Sonia Bhuta, who brings a wealth of experience in program management and strategic planning, as well as expertise in college access. With Sonia's leadership, we look forward to expanding our college guidance capacity and building on SAYA!'s impact.

We are so fortunate to have the support and involvement of community leaders like you. We look forward to working together and creating a brighter future for our youth!

Usha Saxena

Usha Saxena
September 2014

our mission & model

SAYA!'s mission is to create opportunities for South Asian youth to realize their potential.

Our **S.A.G.E.** model (Support, Action, Guidance, and Enrichment) is a targeted, scalable college and career readiness program designed to work in small groups of 15–20 youth over multiple years. Our programming fosters healthy relationship-building among youth, and connects them to the staff who serve as role models. Youth receive tailored and individual support to best meet their needs.

SUPPORT

- **Homework help**
- **One-on-one tutoring**
- **Specialized High School Admission Test prep**
- **SAT preparation**
- **Essay writing workshops**

Support is the heart of SAYA!'s work. Every day we provide hundreds of youth with a safe and encouraging space for academic support and enrichment at the SAYA! Center and schools across Queens and Brooklyn.

At our school-based sites hundreds of elementary and middle schoolers receive help with homework daily and engage in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) activities. At our SAYA! Center, youth participate in our free SAT-prep course. Many of these youth also receive academic support through subject-based tutoring. Writing skills and self-expression are cultivated in our creative writing workshops.

ACTION

- **Desi Girls**
- **Girls Empowerment**
- **Desi Men's Society**
- **ARISE civic engagement program**
- **SAYA! Institute for Public Service (SIPS)**

SAYA! youth grow beyond the classroom through leadership and service learning, both gender-based and co-ed. In 2013 our young women addressed self-esteem and domestic violence and participated in a mentoring event with South Asian female professionals from Deloitte. Our young men examined the issues raised by the Trayvon Martin shooting and trial in discussions facilitated by our staff.

The eight-week SIPS program introduced youth to government, law, and activism and featured field trips to Philadelphia and Washington DC. SAYA! youth participated in high-profile events from the South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) national conference to the United Nations' Malala Day.

GUIDANCE

- **Chalo College**
- **College visits**
- **Career fair**
- **Power lunches & high chais with professional leaders**

Chalo College (Let's go to college! in Hindi, Urdu and Bangla) is SAYA!'s college preparation program. We work with youth one-on-one over four years to build college readiness and accompany them through the admissions and financial aid process.

In 2013 we launched our inaugural College Apps Boot Camp for 40 seniors and we took an overnight college visit to Cornell University, Ithaca College, and Binghamton University.

Our annual career fair in April 2013 drew 50 panelists and 120 youth. Throughout the year, at the SAYA! Center and their own workplaces, leaders in finance, health, small business, education, public service, and more shared career insight with our youth.

ENRICHMENT

- **Sports**
- **Recreation**
- **Arts, music, and dance**
- **Wellness**

SAYA! shapes a well-rounded education by offering enrichment programming that is often unavailable in schools and that fosters goal-setting, teamwork, and increased self-efficacy.

In 2013 the first-ever SAYA! Slam allowed 20 young poets and spoken-word performers to face-off in friendly competition. We held our annual SAYA!'s Got Talent show and Hoops for Hope fundraising basketball tournament and took excursions to museums, amusement parks, and the New York Mets opening day game.

We also kicked off our new eight-week summer digital art program, Media Art Studies in Technology and Industry (MASTI) at the SAYA! Center. With support from the Pinkerton Foundation, MASTI introduces youth to music composition, video and sound art, and studio recording and production.

Record turnout for a night of celebration

With 600 guests in attendance, the **2013 Gala** was the largest gathering in SAYA!'s history. This year, sports was in the air: our emcee was ESPN SportsCenter anchor **Kevin Negandhi**, and our honoree was **Shahid Khan**, owner of the Jacksonville Jaguars of the National Football League and Fulham Football Club of the English Premier League.

Held at **Pier 60** in Manhattan, the Gala featured auction items such as tickets to Super Bowl XLVIII and a tour of ESPN's campus. SAYA! enjoyed support from 26 generous corporate partners, and we are grateful to all our guests, sponsors, and individual donors for making the gala such a success.

The first South Asian Congressman visits

U.S. Representative **Ami Bera** of California, the only South Asian in Congress, talked politics and career at a "High Chai" with 60 SAYA! youth in March 2014. Congressman Bera was one of six elected officials—two New York City council members, one New York State senator, and three members of Congress—to visit SAYA! since 2013. The chance to meet political leaders and ask them candid questions gives SAYA! youth role models of public service in action. "It's amazing to have an Indian congressman in America," SAYA! youth Bhavina "Ann" Hemnath told the *Daily News*. "It shows we're there."

SAYA! in 2013

Our young leaders visit the nation's capital

In August 2013 two dozen SAYA! youth visited Washington DC, as the finale to their summer in the **SAYA! Institute of Public Service** (SIPS). The action-based learning program prepares youth to become civic leaders in government, business or nonprofit careers. They toured the White House, visited Georgetown University, and met with Judge **Sri Srinivasan** of the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit—one of the most prominent South Asian jurists in the country and SAYA!'s 2012 gala honoree.

Celebrating culture and community

In November 2013, 65 youth from the SAYA! Center and our programs at Edward R. Murrow High School and the Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria celebrated Diwali and Eid-ul-Adha together. The day before, youth from P.S. / M.S. 124 Osmond A. Church held a Diwali party with the **Ronald McDonald Charities**. SAYA! youth love to put purpose into celebration: they organized a Winter Dance fundraiser for the homeless.

Career preparation with the pros

With a career panel, résumé workshop, mock interviews, elevator pitch sessions, and a networking lunch, volunteers from **Goldman Sachs** turned SAYA!'s second annual Steps 2 Success event in July 2013 into a fantastic immersion in crucial career skills for some 50 participating youth. Steps 2 Success was developed as part of our ongoing partnership with Goldman Sachs's Community TeamWorks program, which allows its employees to take time away from the office to volunteer with local nonprofit organizations. We were excited to partner with Goldman Sachs again for Steps 2 Success in 2014.

Empowering young women

Women leaders from business, nonprofits and the arts discussed cultural barriers, personal development and college and career preparation with 100 young women at SAYA!'s Desi Girls conference in May 2014 at **The New School**. The chance for South Asian young women to come together and interact with role models attuned to their social and emotional landscape made the event a huge success. The feedback was so positive that we plan to do it again next year.

The poverty trap

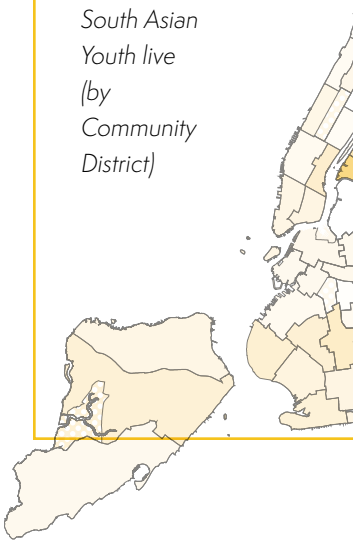
Over one-quarter of South Asian youth in New York City live below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Over half live in low-income families (under 200% of FPL). South Asian youth poverty occurs citywide but is especially pronounced in Brooklyn and the Bronx.

There is a high risk of intergenerational poverty setting in. Education, enrichment, and comprehensive support are crucial tools to move individuals, families, and communities forward.

NYC South Asian youth, poverty by borough

	SA youth	all youth
citywide near poor (below 200% FPL)	54.8%	51.3%
citywide poor (below FPL)	**26.7%**	**28.1%**
Queens	23.1%	18.9%
Brooklyn	34.8%	31.3%
The Bronx	37.5%	40.3%
Manhattan	33.4%	24.5%
Staten Island	14.2%	16.5%

Where NYC's South Asian Youth live (by Community District)



THE NEED FOR SAYA!

SAYA

Critical mass

There are now more than 100,000 South Asian youth in New York City and the population is growing fast. In Queens one youth in eight is South Asian.

NYC South Asian youth, recent population changes

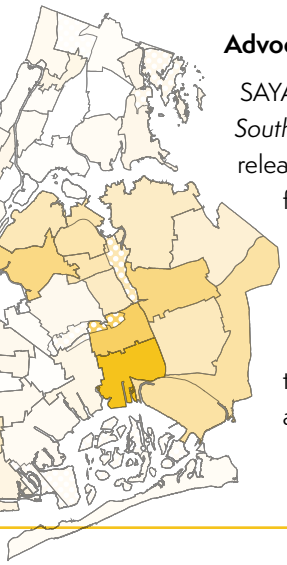
	2000	2010	change
all youth	*2,134,612*	*1,995,187*	*–6.5%*
non-SA youth	2,051,645	1,892,963	–7.7%
SA youth	82,967	102,224	+23.2%
SA percentage of total youth	3.9%	5.1%	

all demographic data from U.S. Census Bureau 2008–10 American Community Survey

Obstacles to opportunity

SAYA!'s research shows South Asian youth in New York City encounter difficulties in the school, family, and broader community settings that hinder their access to opportunity. Targeted supports build youth confidence and ability, family information and communication, and school awareness of the needs of South Asian youth.

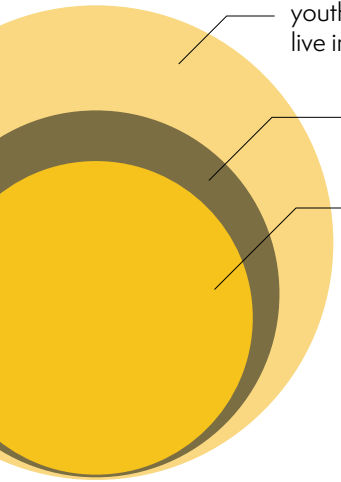
quotes from SAYA! youth



Advocating for our youth and community

SAYA!'s first-ever policy report, *New York City South Asian youth: critical mass, urgent needs*, was released in the autumn of 2013 and drew coverage from the New York Daily News, NBC4, and more. The report draws on analysis of US Census data and interviews with SAYA! youth and staff to present a full picture of South Asian youth in the city—where they live, their exposure to poverty, the issues they face at home and in school.

!'S FOCUS



102,000 South Asian youth (ages 19 and under) live in New York City...

...of whom **59,000** live in low income households...

...of whom **46,000** live in Brooklyn or Queens.

Where They Went

In the fall of 2013 SAYA! youth enrolled at colleges including

Baruch College • Binghamton University • Brooklyn College • Fordham University • Hunter College • John Jay College of Criminal Justice • Macaulay Honors College at CUNY • Mercy College • New York City College of Technology • New York University • Pace University • St. Joseph's College • Stony Brook University • SUNY Maritime College • SUNY Oswego • SUNY Potsdam • Syracuse University • University at Buffalo • Vanderbilt University • Vassar College • York College

SAYA!'S IMPACT

1800+

youth served each academic year

9.5K+

youth served by SAYA!'s programs since 1996

98%

12th graders in SAYA!'s Chalo College admitted to an institution of higher learning

200

point average increase in SAT scores by students who attend SAYA!'s SAT prep course

$637K

financial aid and scholarships secured for college-bound seniors in 2013

faces of SAYA! in 2013

Rafia Haq

Edward R. Murrow High School • SAYA! youth since 2012

- **Highlight** One of the first two youth to sign up for SAYA!'s programs in Brooklyn
- **What's next** Cornell University on a $40,000 scholarship package, and a possible major in finance or biochemistry

"SAYA! taught me to go beyond my comfort zone and gave us a safe space to talk and share stories. It helped me imagine myself going to a great school and gave me the confidence to apply to the Ivy League. SAYA! showed me how to take initiative and pursue my passions. I plan to choose a career where I am happy to walk into work every day – and where I can give back and help others."

STAFF PROFILE • NAELA KHAN

Naela Khan went back to her old high school to make a difference. Born and raised in Brooklyn, Naela graduated from Edward R. Murrow High School in Midwood and went on to earn her Masters of Science in School Counseling from Brooklyn College. Now she's back at Murrow—this time as Program Coordinator for SAYA's first venture in Brooklyn. Under Naela's leadership the program has grown from 10 students in 2012 to 70 today.

"Students are bringing other students in to join SAYA! and receive the support we give, so we must be doing something right!"

In this community, Naela says, youth face issues that stem from low family incomes and competing pressures that often leave them unaware of their options and vulnerable to depression and dysfunction.

"They feel like they are living in two different worlds, one at home and one outside of home, and a lot of them fall off track."

Naela says the key to building SAYA!'s program at Murrow has been creating a safe space for the youth. "Being accepting and non-judgmental is essential."

Through SAYA!, the Murrow students are getting guidance, college assistance, trips, and enrichment experiences to which they had no access before. Naela sees the efforts bearing fruit.

"Giving support to youth who were falling off track and seeing them come back on track is a great satisfaction," she says. "And watching my youth succeed in high school and go on to great colleges has been my proudest moment this year."

Bhavina "Ann" Hemnath

Hillcrest High School • SAYA! youth since 2013

- **Highlight** Introducing Congressman Ami Berra on his visit to SAYA! and speaking at the Desi Girls Conference
- **What's next** College applications

"SAYA! opened my mind to my own potential. It has helped me realize I can accomplish things I hadn't considered before, like going to college at a top school. We went on trips to Smith and Vassar colleges and now I can imagine myself succeeding there. There's a lot of acceptance at SAYA! – we get the opportunity to have open-minded discussions without being judged. SAYA! has inspired me to bring this positivity to my own school."

Riyan Choudhury

Bard High School • SAYA! youth since 2012

- **Highlight** Service projects including a clothing drive for victims of Hurricane Sandy
- **What's next** Penn State University on scholarship, and an intended career in petroleum engineering

"SAYA!'s service projects opened my eyes and transformed me into someone motivated to lead. SAYA! also made a huge difference in preparing me for college. My SAT score increased by 500 points, and SAYA! staff even helped with my philosophy class. Without SAYA! I would not have discovered my dream school. And the most beautiful thing is how we come to see our peers and staff as family."

Nishath Azad

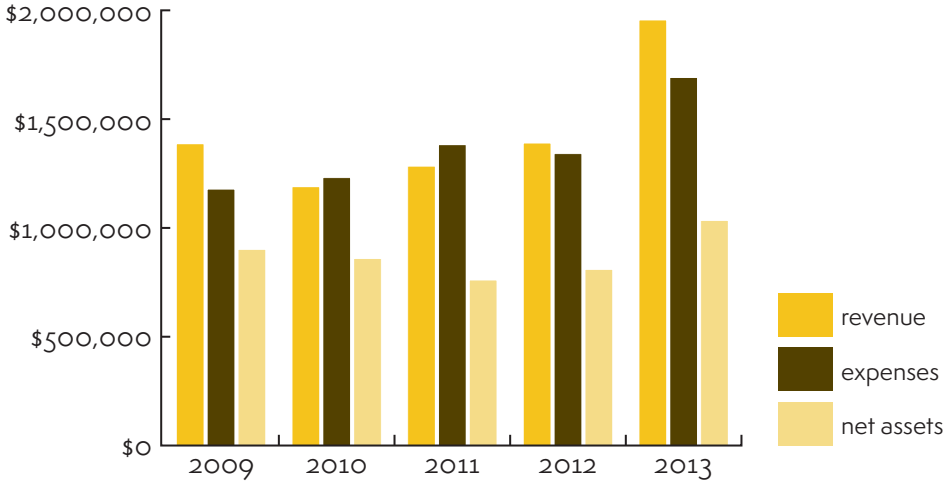
Brooklyn Tech High School • SAYA! youth since 2012

- **Highlight** Writing poetry and performing at talent shows and poetry slams
- **What's next** SUNY Geneseo on scholarship, and an intended career in journalism

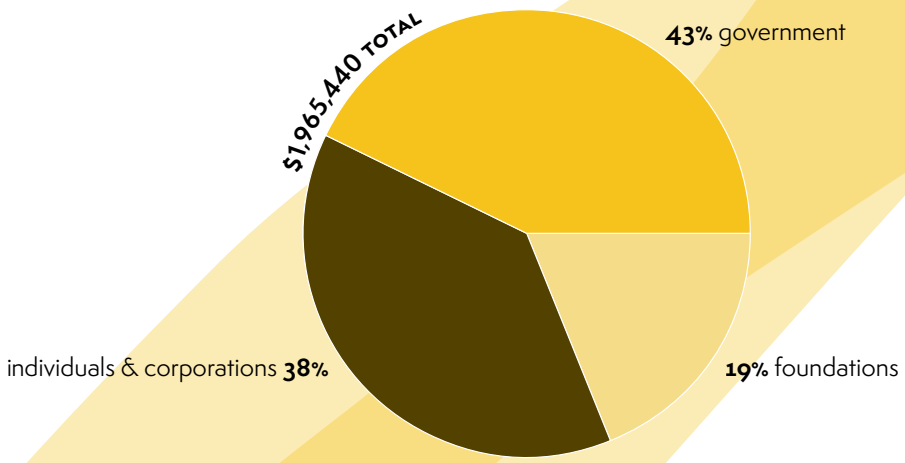
"Before, I never felt like it was worth it to express myself. But SAYA! increased my confidence and provided the resources to figure out where my passion lies. I learned to play the drums, and I discovered my love of poetry through writing class. At SAYA!, the youth and staff encouraged me to speak freely and be myself. SAYA! helped me find my path."

financial summary

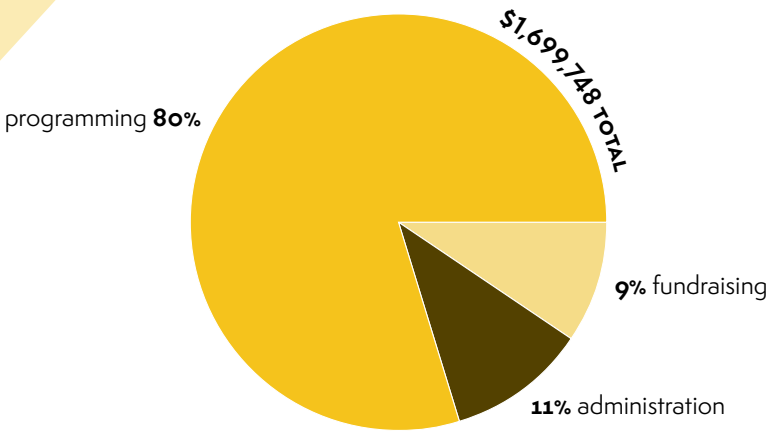
IN 2013 SAYA! EXPERIENCED A MAJOR EXPANSION OF REVENUE & ACTIVITIES...



...WHILE REVENUE SOURCES REMAINED DIVERSE...



...AND NEARLY 80% OF EXPENDITURES WENT DIRECTLY TO PROGRAMMING



data for fiscal year 2013 (July 2012 – June 2013);

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