



MCN

Muslim Community Network



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

EVALUATION & REPORT BY



SEED IMPACT

Founded in 2003, Muslim Community Network (MCN) is a New York City-based nonprofit that uses civic education and youth leadership development to expand and shape the public narrative about being Muslim in the United States of America. While Muslims have been in the public eye since 9/11, who we are, and the reality of our lived experiences are often at odds with how we are seen. At MCN, our vision is the emergence of a Muslim-American identity that transcends generational, ethnic, gender, racial, and class-based boundaries. Our work facilitates this emergence and builds bridges with other communities of faith to forge peace, justice, and inclusivity.



“

It is such a blessing to have a group of sisters discuss topics concerning our futures while supporting one another. The MCN forum was a beautiful opportunity that made space for our perspectives and fostered solidarity among us. May Allah SWT bless you for putting together this necessary forum!

-Abrar Omeish, Fairfax County School Board

LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Muslim Community Network Family and Friends,

I trust this message reaches you in good health, considering the trauma that COVID-19 has left worldwide. 2021 brought on new frontiers for MCN to serve the Muslim community and the community-at-large. Our team has been so steadfast and dedicated in fulfilling our programmatic goals and deliverables that we did not realize how soon we came to the year's end. I am excited to share how our different programs have impacted the community.

Firstly, our team has grown from four to now nine staff members. Even as we onboarded new staff, MCN's strategic goal has always been to unite and collaborate with Muslim-serving community-based organizations. Through various events we have hosted and been part of, including the Muslim Stakeholder's Roundtable Discussions, we have touched and engaged thousands.

As one example, we are grateful that even amid the pandemic, we could bring more than 25 thought leaders to an all-day virtual summit to provide contemplative leadership for the Muslim community on topics involving youth development, civic engagement, and Muslim narrative changes in the media. MCN's Summit provided an opportunity for participants to work on dismantling the misconceptions and have open discussions.

Another significant highlight was having MCN's work be recognized by the Office of New York City Mayor, Eric Adams. I have been selected to serve on the civic-engagement committee for his transition team.

As we forge ahead and try to climb out of the disaster that this pandemic has caused, MCN remains resilient and strategic. We are determined to make the most impactful contributions to our communities and our youth, as we advocate for the 800,000 Muslim New Yorkers and help shift the narrative!

Our most salient work is yet to come. We are fortunate to have our community's trust, support, and respect as we enter our next chapter. We are deeply grateful to our families, friends, funders, investors, and supporters for assisting us in making a meaningful impact throughout the community. We appreciate your deep commitment to the work. Partnering with you makes us all more powerful together.

We could not do this work without you. THANK YOU!



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Aniqah Nawabi". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Sincerely yours,

Aniqah Nawabi, Executive Director

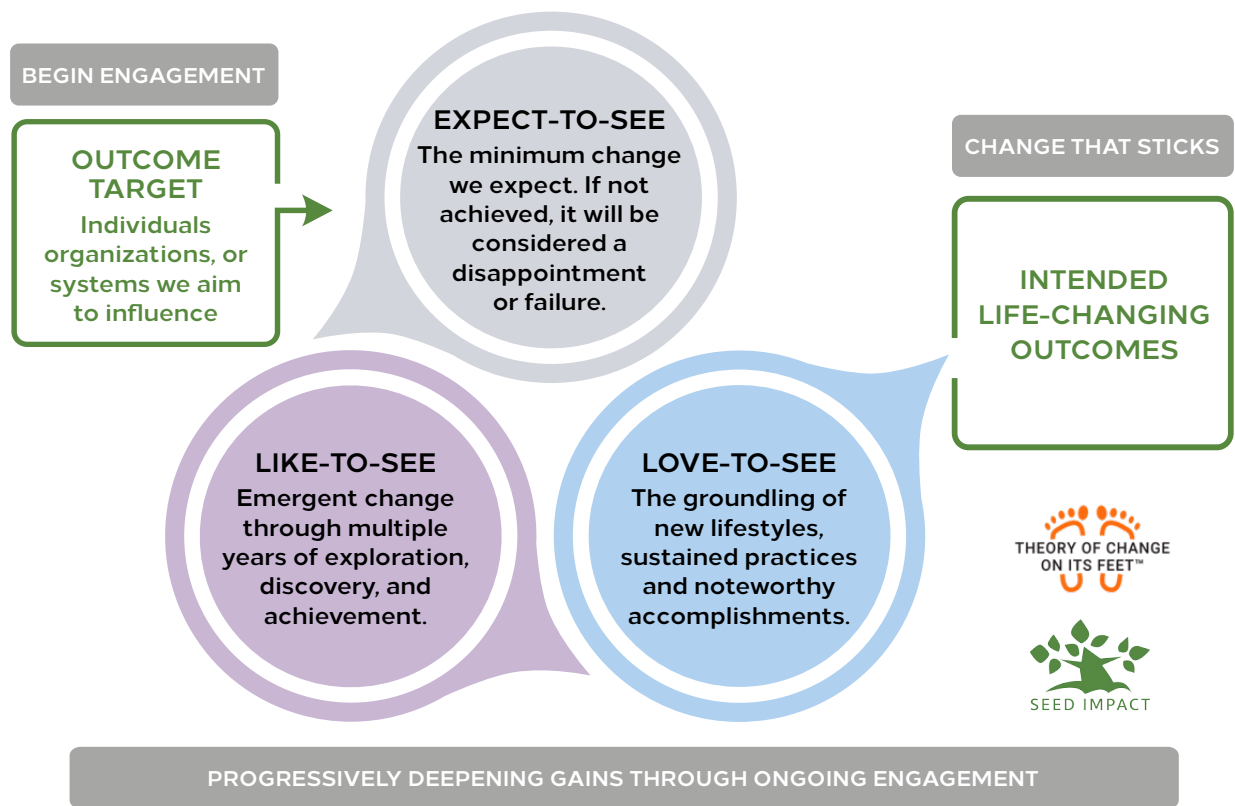
OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

The results in this report are based on data collected using SEED Impact’s Theory of Change on Its Feet™. This framework guides our visioning, goal-setting, and ongoing assessment of results for each MCN initiative and the organization as a whole. Our team began by clarifying the vision of impact we aim for within the community. We then translated the vision to define measurable, progressive results for each outcome target. Achieving our short and medium-term results greatly increases the likelihood that long-range, life-changing, and systems-changing outcomes can be attained.

5 OUTCOME TARGETS

- Mosque-goers
- Muslim nonprofits
- Muslim women
- Non-Muslim participants
- Youth program participants

THEORY OF CHANGE ON ITS FEET™ MODEL



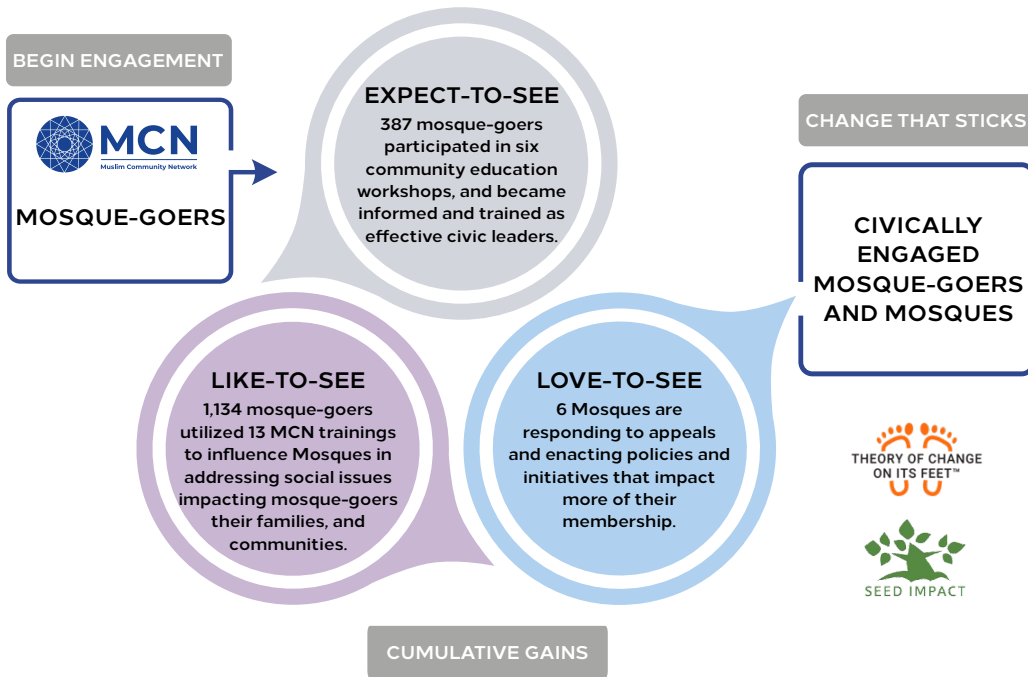
Diligent attention to this framework ensures that day-to-day activities are aligned with our theory of change and targeting our vision for long-term social impact.

For each outcome target, clear criteria were defined for tracking levels of achievement realized. For example, for a Mosque to reach the Love-to-See category, it must have met at least two of these criteria during 2021:

- A vibrant network of socially conscious individuals is established at their Mosque
- Current and anticipated social concerns are effectively discussed, dialogued, and addressed by the Mosque community
- Mosque leaders reach out to other Mosques to share their experiences and offer support in replicating the process with them and MCN

MOSQUE-GOERS

In 2021, through our Community Education program, Masjids and Mosque-goers collaborated to organize 19 engagements reaching over 1,500 individuals through partnerships. Both virtually and in-person, we gave Mosque-goers opportunities to become civically engaged and learn about their civic processes. Mosque-goers utilized our training to impact their local communities.



Alhamdulillah, Muslims across many mosques are being very receptive to the census pop-ups that we have within the community. We are teaching Muslims across New York that the census is important for allocating resources and building our representation to the US government. I have seen that Muslims are taking it very seriously and it helps that we reassure community members with the facts, such as census information is safe and private. Teaching our community about its importance gives them incentives and will help our community get the help and resources it needs.

-Imam Kake,
Masjid Loogman

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR PROGRAMMING FOR MOSQUE-GOERS

Encouraging Census Participation. MCN helped register 2,000 Muslims to the Census. We hosted phone-banking sessions in eight different languages, including English, Bengali, Urdu, Soninke, Fulani, and French. We targeted phone-banking in predominately Muslim-neighborhoods such as Astoria, Parkchester, and Bay Ridge.

Imam Kake shared with his community members the importance of filling out the census. He utilized what he learned from MCN and the tools MCN provided to help his mosque engage in critical civic engagement activity.

Applying for the Excluded Worker's Fund. Many excluded workers, immigrants, and undocumented individuals and their families were assisted in recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, as MCN set up application-preparation hubs to disseminate

resources and help individuals apply for the Excluded Worker's Fund in languages they understood.

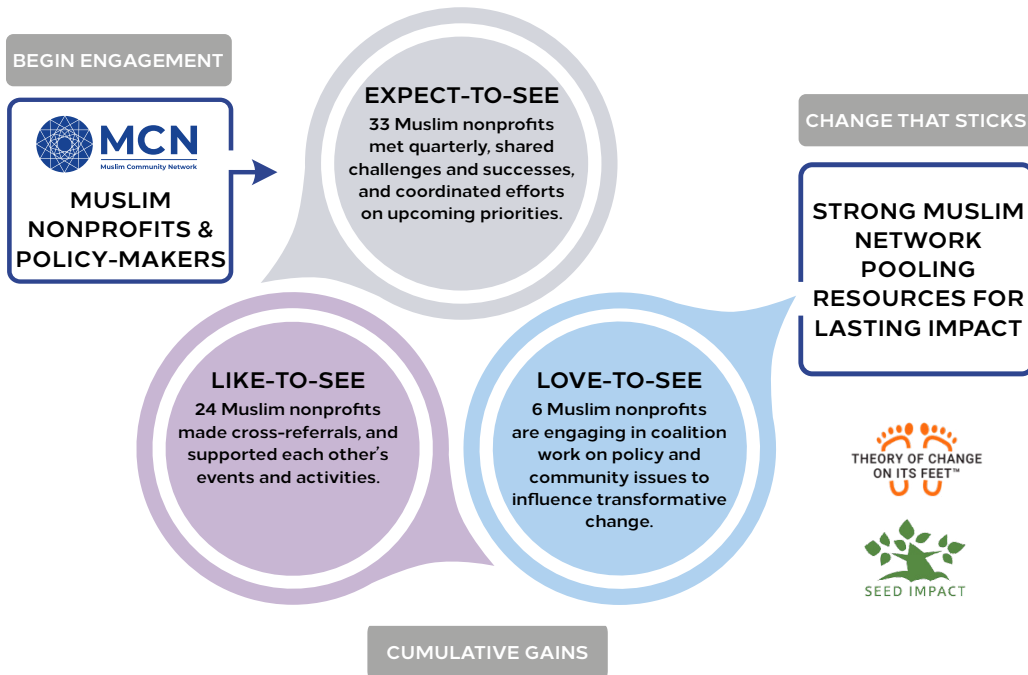
Promoting Vaccine Equity. We promoted vaccine education and provided vaccine clinics in Masjid communities to promote vaccine equity. We helped 113 individuals get vaccinated. Our efforts were recognized and featured in a PBS special.

Supporting a Local Food Pantry. MCN served 1,866 individuals through our food pantry assistance. We also helped Djenaba Toure-Diaby provide food to her community through her pantry, Zeina Lorraine. We connected her to a local council member and city resources, which enabled her to buy and install a fridge in her local Masjid. We also worked with her to coordinate food drives and toy drives, thus supporting her leadership and community empowerment journey.



MUSLIM NONPROFITS

In 2021, MCN convened quarterly meetings of the Muslim Stakeholders Roundtable, engaging 33 New York City-based Muslim organizations to coordinate efforts, maximize impact, learn from each other, and develop capacity-building activities to strengthen Muslim civic organizations. Topics included mental health in the Muslim community and sharing with national refugee agencies how to support incoming Muslim refugees.



I learned a great deal on how MCN Stakeholders and various agencies are working hard to welcome Muslim families to NYC. The roundtable meeting was very informative and well organized. It was important to hear the challenges that organizations and stakeholders are facing in supporting newly arrived immigrants, including Afghan refugees. I also learned to assist the Afghan refugees coming in and about the different agencies who are providing assistance.

-Non-profit participant

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR PROGRAMMING FOR MUSLIM NONPROFITS & POLICYMAKERS

Organizing for Halal Food Provision during the Pandemic:

MCN, along with its stakeholders, organized around the provision of halal foods during the pandemic. Our advocacy team wrote letters to the Mayor's office; set up meetings; provided evidence of the need, and continued to remain engaged to help bring halal food contracts to halal food providers.

Partnering for COVID-Relief and Hate Crime Advocacy.

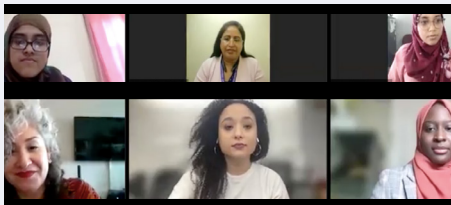
In our August Muslim Stakeholders Roundtable, 13 Muslim organizations engaged and shared accomplishments. New partnerships were created to help facilitate organizational programming, and new funding was secured to help with COVID-relief programs and hate crimes advocacy. MCN launched the COVID-19 hotline after consulting with Muslim nonprofits about the need for this service. The hotline was staffed with volunteers speaking seven different languages. We provided \$25,000 in cash assistance through the hotline and helped deliver food to those who were home-bound.

Reaching Over 400 Family Members in Food and Toy Drives.

MCN collaborated with several stakeholder organizations to organize food and toy drives in various communities throughout the city, reaching over 400 family members. Participating organizations included Gambian Youth Organization, Arab-American Association of NY, ICNA Relief Shelter for food drives, Yemeni American Merchants Association, and ICNA Relief Shelter for toy drives.

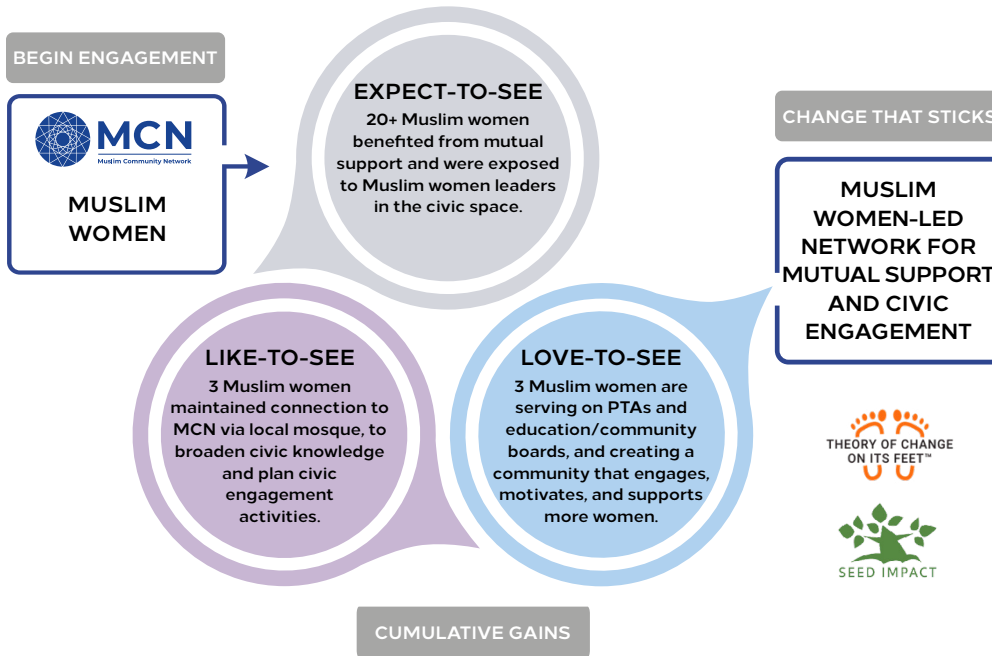
Assessing the Narrative at the 9/11 Memorial Museum.

In December, MCN hosted a visit to the 9/11 Memorial Museum for 15 individuals. CAIR-NY, Arab American Association of NY, Interfaith Center of NY, Islamic Relief USA, and MCN sent representatives. The aim was to conduct first-person assessments of the museum exhibits from the perspective of a Muslim New Yorker visiting the museum for the first time. In a debrief, the group shared thoughts and concerns about the narrative on Muslim Americans, and identified themes related to Islam and Muslims that seemed problematic.



MUSLIM WOMEN

In 2021, we launched Virtual Muslim Women Civic Forums, a space where Muslim women convened monthly to discuss issues and plan activities related to their civic leadership development. In addition, we assembled a virtual speaker series, as a monthly virtual platform where Muslim women shared inspirational stories of their journeys in social justice and community organizing.



It was empowering to share my journey with the women leaders who came to the MCN Women’s Civic Forum. Our connections affirm our wholeness. Spaces like this are needed for women to draw strength from each other. I benefited tremendously from being in the company of other women leaders even as I hoped that they were able to take something of value from me.

*-Dr. Sarah Sayeed,
Chair & Executive Director,
NYC Civic Engagement
Commission*

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR PROGRAMMING FOR MUSLIM WOMEN

Connecting Art and Social Justice. In August, MCN invited 19 regular participants in our virtual Muslim Women Civic Forums to the New York City High Line Art exhibit. This public artwork touches on the issues of surveillance and aerial warfare. The women could see many of the social justice topics that were raised in our conversations on display as art; they appreciated the connection between art and social justice movements. As a bonus, this experience allowed the women to meet each other in person and bond even more.

Improving our Grassroots Organizing. Adama Bah was a frequent participant in many MCN programs, including Muslim Women Civic Forums and Muslim Stakeholder Roundtable. In both forums, she had a platform to share her journey, and network to improve her community grassroots organizing. When MCN was awarded funds from New York State to help community members apply for the Excluded Worker’s Fund, we added her to the team to help us reach immigrants and the undocumented community for whom she has been a long-time advocate.

Enhancing our Social Media Presence. Reda has constantly supported our Muslim Women Civic Forums, attending many as an active participant. Reda provided invaluable advice to MCN on our Domestic Violence Awareness Infographic, sharing her experiences using voice-overs for social media content. We appreciated Reda’s insights and are currently working with her to add her voice to social media presentations, to impact a wider audience.

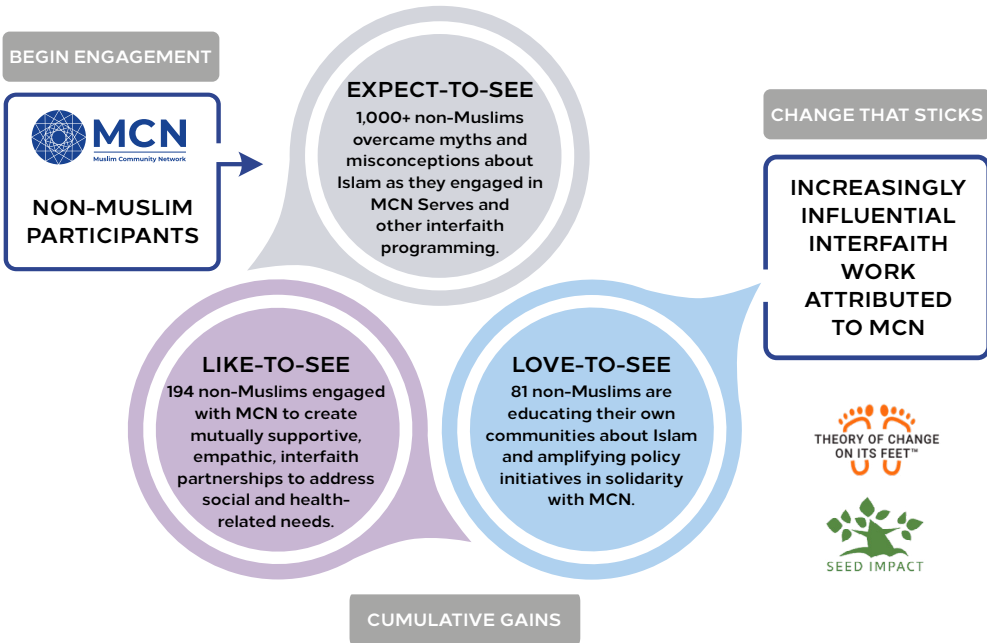
Increasing Voter Registration. MCN organized a voter registration drive in October, at Queens Diversity Plaza, to teach women about the electoral process. We registered 15, and shared civic engagement information with five women.

New Program Creation. We solidified our Muslim Women Civic Empowerment Program that will launch in 2022 to empower older, often ignored, or marginalized Muslim women.



NON-MUSLIM PARTICIPANTS

Our Diversity Education program engages in schools, agencies, and companies to shed light on Islam and Muslims in New York City and beyond. We invite influential Muslim scholars to address common misconceptions held about Islam. Our intent is to build interfaith partnerships and collaborations that work to change the negative narrative in the media and public discourse about Muslims.



DIVERSITY SPEAKER SERIES VOICES:

“There is a lot of misinformation in the world about Islam... I know now that I need to do my part to make sure that Muslims feel safe.”

“In the future when I meet someone who is Muslim, I will be able to know what they can't eat, what they can eat, what they shouldn't wear, etc., in order to not make them feel uncomfortable.”

“In attending the Speaker Event on the Revelation of the Quran, I received a simpler and clearer understanding about the Quran.”

“I learned the truth about several misconceptions that have been perpetuated. In the future, I will be able to speak to these when I hear them.”

MCN conducted 31 engagements with non-Muslims, including our diversity education presentations, diversity speaker series, scriptural reasoning sessions, and interfaith events, reaching a total of 1,000+ individuals. Participants conveyed that their understanding of Islam and Muslims increased by an average of 26 percent after our presentations.

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR PROGRAMMING FOR NON-MUSLIM PARTICIPANTS

Supporting Religious Diversity in NYC Public Schools.

Fifteen stakeholder organizations were motivated to sign on in support of The New York City Council 1257 resolution. The resolution called upon the New York City Department of Education to provide all grade levels with a curriculum that focuses on religious diversity and offers educators professional development focused on religious diversity.

Responding to Violence in the Holy Land.

Nine organizations and eight individuals spanning many faith backgrounds joined MCN in May, to pen a public letter condemning the escalation of violence in the Holy Land. We had 143 faith leaders and institutions endorse the letter worldwide. Together we maintain that hate against any one of us is hate against all of us.

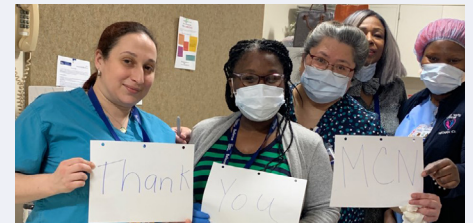
Commemorating the 20th Anniversary of 9/11.

We came together in love and harmony on September 11, 2021,

to pay homage to the 20th anniversary. MCN provided a platform for our interfaith partners to share their prayers of healing and love with the public. Additionally, we shared how religious minorities, such as Muslims and Sikhs, also suffered in the aftermath of 9/11 due to Islamophobia and anti-Muslim rhetoric.

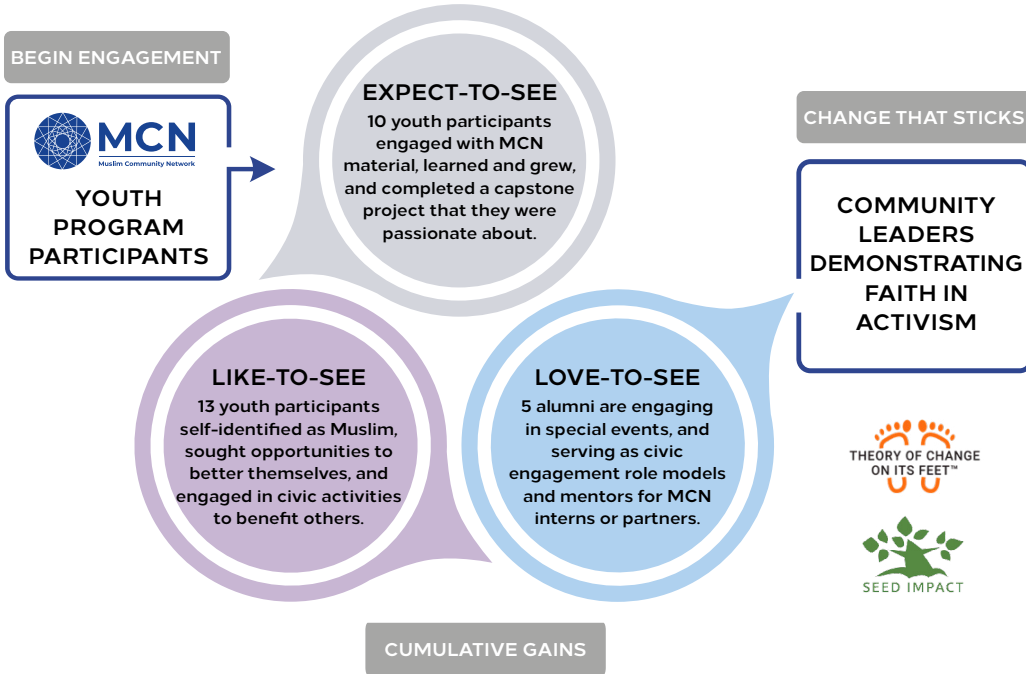
Advocating for Religious Literacy Curriculum.

MCN continued advocacy work on Resolution 1257. If passed by NYC City Council, this resolution will provide a religious literacy curriculum and professional development training for educators and staff in NYC public schools. We worked with an interfaith coalition to present this resolution to City Council, and convinced 24 council members to sign this resolution. This was an important step toward realizing our goal for MCN interfaith work to translate into public policy that helps faith-based communities feel comfortable living out their faith in our city.



YOUTH PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

MCN's Youth Civic Leadership Program aims to educate and civically empower 10th and 11th grade Muslim New Yorkers and help them claim their stake in our country. Our fellows build a lasting bond with one another, develop leadership skills, and brainstorm solutions to challenges they see in their communities. Participants each complete a capstone project that they are passionate about. We further encourage participants to continue to engage with MCN as alumni and join other youth in MCN youth summer programs.



Through the fellowship, I've been inspired to expand my reach. I've always been interested in nonprofit organizations and social work, and now I'm able to kick-start projects that help my local community. Although reaching out still scares me sometimes, I can see that I need to rely on others to accomplish great feats. The fellowship has taught me a lot about my city and the problems that need to be addressed, and I hope that I can be a part of the team that provides solutions to those problems, and change the world for the better.

-Civic Leadership Participant

13 youth completed the program in Spring 2021, and 13 additional youth began participating in the Fall. Examples of their capstone projects include: petitioning for halal food at their high school; providing care packages to homeless people; educating peers on their Constitutional rights; distributing hand sanitizers and masks; raising awareness about the head covering/hijab, and raising awareness about immigrant needs.

STORIES ABOUT OUR ACTIVE ALUMNI

Omera joined our alumni book club, participated in online webinars, and continued to advocate for enclosed trashcans on her block (her civic capstone project). She stays in regular contact with the fellowship instructor and actively shares MCN's work on social media.

Indra is one of the three alumni now serving on the MCN Youth Advisory Board. In this capacity, she leads community service work at MCN. She also engaged in multiple MCN special events, such as performing spoken word poetry and joining our summer book club.

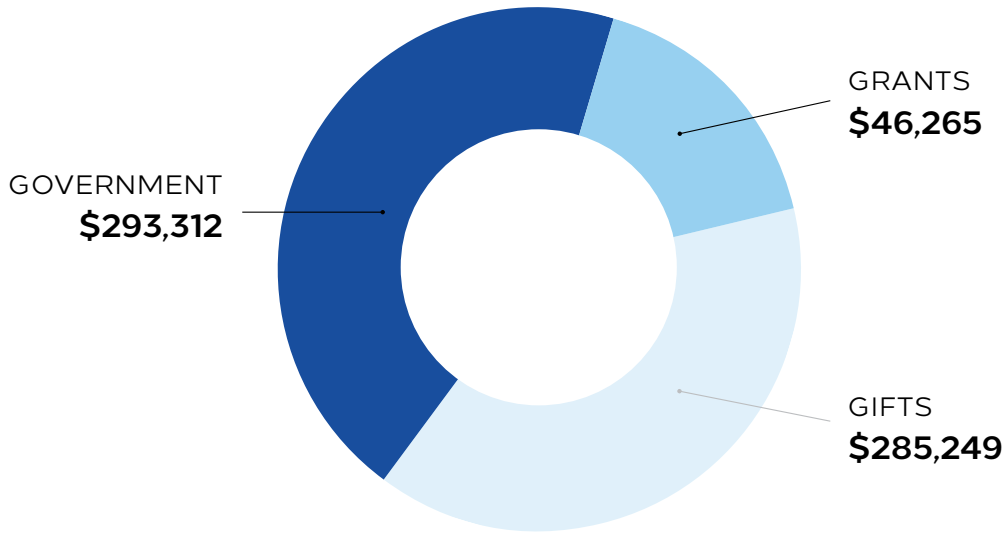
Mustafah has remained an active participant in almost every youth alumni event. He serves on MCN's Youth Advisory Board and is currently leading a coat drive project. He helped our fellowship instructor with outreach at his school and volunteered at a phone bank for the 2021 election. He serves as a civic role model for future civic leaders and will guest speak at our Spring 2022 cohort launch.



*Youth names are fictitious to protect anonymity

FINANCIALS

FY JULY - JUNE 30, 2021

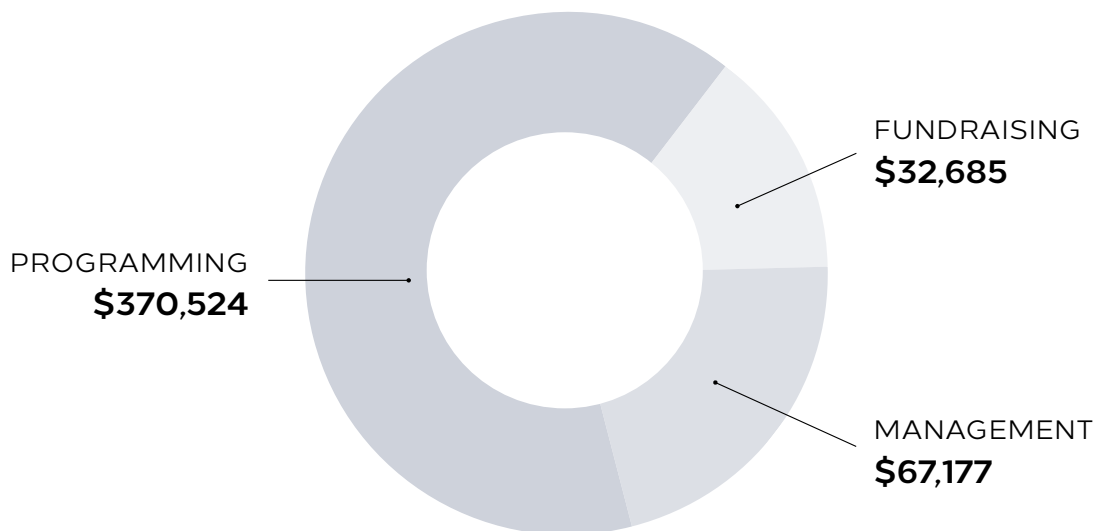


REVENUE



Just because parents don't see it, doesn't mean it's not there, it's important to have conversations about mental health even among communities that don't like to or want to because we're all we've got.

-Noor Sukkar, Youth Panelist



EXPENSES

MEET OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

We greatly appreciate the heart, dedication, and skills of our 2021 Board members.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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CEO/Founder of Bridging Cultures, Inc.

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Rana Aboomar
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Sweta Verma
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Mama Sama
Excluded Workers Fund Outreach Coordinator

Adama Bah
Excluded Workers Fund Outreach Coordinator

Ajifanta Marenah
Civic Education and Advocacy Coordinator

Musfika Moshahid
Muslim Women's Program Coordinator

Maryam Khaldi
Brooklyn Program Coordinator

Ali Kaba
Census Captain

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ADDITIONAL BOARD MEMBERS EMERITUS

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For more information go to
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EVALUATION & REPORT BY

