

School's Out Washington

2022

Annual Report



Dear Community,

I'm proud to share this summary of our work in 2022, a critical year for supporting youth programs as they continued to navigate pandemic challenges while returning to a new normal. As providers stretched to support the mental, physical, and social health and wellbeing of Washington's children and young people, SOWA was there with responsive coaching and training, grant funding, and advocacy.

In 2022, we had the honor of funding dozens of summer programs across the state that stepped up to support outdoor experiences and social connections with a focus on historically marginalized communities. And we were thrilled to double the number of programs we support through our Best Starts for Kids Expanded Learning Initiative in King County. This second, multi-year investment brings robust funding and professional development support to BIPOC-led youth programs and programs working collaboratively to support young people in low-income housing and school communities.

As programs navigated hiring and staff development, SOWA expanded its training and coaching offerings to better address mental health, cultural responsiveness, and equitable practices, which brought us back to pre-pandemic levels of professional learning engagement.

We worked alongside our youth development community to establish a strong coalition and collective voice for advocacy. And, with growing visibility and recognition of our sector, we collaborated with our partners in the state legislature and state agencies to plan for greater funding and systemic supports to ensure that the life-changing impact of youth development and expanded learning programming is accessible to all Washington young people.

Through it all, we strived to care for our team and navigate unprecedented change and the inevitable fatigue that comes during such times. We are lucky to have deeply committed staff, board, partners, collaborators, funders, and champions. We couldn't do any of this without our community.

With gratitude,

Elizabeth

SOWA drives positive systemic change by supporting a robust ecosystem of high-quality expanded learning programs for all of Washington's children and young people, particularly those furthest from justice.

BSK 2.0

King County Best Starts for Kids Expanded Learning, year one

In summer of 2022, School's Out Washington launched the second iteration of the Best Starts for Kids (BSK) Expanded Learning initiative. **We celebrated the distribution of over 16 million dollars in funding awarded across 62 different community programs throughout King County**, and an in-depth guided experience of the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) process.

Thirty BIPOC-led organizations and 9 place-based collaboratives were funded. These awardees offer a wide variety of programming activities including academic support, cultural enrichment, art, healthy living, STEM activities, and more.

The 62 grantees hit the ground running with school and programs starting shortly after the funding announcement. The BSK Expanded Learning initiative is a dual-investment model, meaning that grantees receive both financial support and professional development support.

Because of this, many grantees were not only starting off new programs with the start of the school year while adjusting to all the things that come along with receiving a large grant for their programs, but they were also beginning a brand-new Quality Improvement Pathways experience.

Trainings offered by SOWA are specifically chosen to help build fundamental knowledge and skills related to youth programming, and to help address some of the most common challenges that the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) assessment data showed BSK programs were facing.

BSK awardees currently serve 3,365 youth, 92% of whom are BIPOC and 85% of whom are living in poverty.

With this funding, they will expand access to serve 5,305 youth each year.



Photo: Seattle Housing Authority at Yesler Terrace



Photo: Somali Health Board

The BSK Expanded Learning initiative provides funding and resources for expanded learning providers across King County to increase access to high quality expanded learning opportunities for youth (ages 5–13) who are BIPOC and/or living in poverty.

BSK 2.0 Cohorts

BIPOC-led organizations

BIPOC-led organizations are defined as single organizations in which the majority of leadership, board, staff, and engaged youth are BIPOC. They are embedded in culturally specific or cross-cultural communities of color.

Place-based collaboratives

Place-based collaboratives are made up of three or more organizations offering programming in underserved areas focused in schools and housing communities. They include at least three providers working in partnership and are centered in school and housing communities. Partners co-create the expanded learning programs that are provided collaboratively.

Photo: Double Dutch Divas is a part of the Brighter Futures Collaborative

“I really appreciate experiencing the strategies we are learning about instead of just hearing or reading about them. When you live the learning, it is easier to apply.”

BSK grantee





Celebrating queer youth leadership every day

“Oasis believes that queer youth are amazing leaders that have the ability to change the world,” says Siggy Frank, Program Manager at Oasis Youth Center. Frank was introduced to Oasis at 14 years old and participated in their programming until “aging out” at 25. He came back as a volunteer and joined the staff at Oasis almost six years ago.

“I’m not alone in my experience. There are a number of staff here that also share that passion. The people that supported us at Oasis when we were young really made an impact,” said Frank, “We want to be able to come back and do that for future generations as well. We want to have a place where folks feel welcome and their uniqueness is celebrated.”

Oasis offers youth a variety of programming including yoga, weekly check-ins, a leadership summit, and an annual prom planned by the youth.

“One thing that we want youth and families to know when they start participating in our program is that we’re here for them. That’s the biggest piece—that we believe in creating this community together,” explained Frank.

“We do our best to connect youth and families to other community partners as well. For example, we don’t provide housing support specifically, but we make sure to partner with community organizations that do. The youth know [right away] that they can ask us for support they need.”

Oasis is the only organization that is specifically dedicated to LGBTQ youth in Pierce County. From Puyallup and Bonney Lake to Spanaway and Olympia, youth come from all over the region to be in community at Oasis. Even youth who move out of state stay in touch and connected to programming from across the country. The organization is planning to open several satellite locations in Pierce County in the coming years.

SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNITY

Oasis Youth Center

Pierce County

Bridge Conference 2022

Together again, in person!



CONFERENCE THEME

Illuminating. Becoming.

Conferences are a time to learn, reconnect, and dream a little bigger. For Bridge Conference 2022 we were back together again, in-person. Youth development leaders, program staff, and community organizers traveled from across the state and beyond to network and gain insights from fellow expanded learning professionals. Lines formed at registration as early as 7:30 in the morning as people gathered with their pastries and coffee awaiting the first plenary. Tanaya Winder grounded the crowd of over 530 in intentionality and the hard work of the “heartwork.” From there we were dispersed across the Greater Tacoma Convention Center and the Marriott Tacoma Downtown for two days of learning and connection.

What was *illuminated* during this year’s conference?

- Workshops centering **self care**, **equity** in many forms, and **best practices** for youth programs and systems
- Elements of **celebration** that included kicking off our second day with an amazing performance by the Lincoln Drumline
- A photo booth to capture the **light-hearted moments** in-between workshops and a reception at the end of the first day to toast to 20 years of Bridge
- The Bridge **values** of Change, Belonging and Leadership woven throughout the conference

Creating space for belonging

Vamos Outdoor Project works with Latino/e migrant, multilingual, and newcomer youth in Whatcom and Skagit County. What, on the surface, appears to be a traditional sports program is also deeply committed to addressing the mental health and resource needs of migrant youth and their families.

A majority are indigenous to Mexico and Central America and their families work in agriculture. For most of these youth, it is their first time experiencing activities like backpacking, mountain biking, kayaking, and more.

Vamos programs are offered in partnership with five school districts through the Migrant Education Program. A portion of their work includes year-round direct programming with families. Staff spend time in meetings and other spaces advocating with partners and school districts to ensure that resources are equitably allocated to students who'd benefit the most from them. Vamos also offers a program called Fiesta de Libros that helps youth maintain a connection to their native languages and improve their literacy.

“Our enrollment process is a lot more than signing their kids up for our programs. We have discussions with families about why these [opportunities] are important. We talk about youth mental health and normalizing that within the Latino/e community. That intake meeting covers so many things to help families enroll in our programs, but also connect to the community and other resources,” said Leadership Team member, Andy Basabe.

Vamos presence in schools during the week helps youth build relationships with trusted adults that extend beyond the building. Establishing a bridge between schoolwork supports and the outdoor play and nature excursions offered on the weekend is meant to nourish the whole child and create a link between school and community. Staff have noticed that there's a shift when young people stop seeing Vamos as a single activity or program and it becomes a space of belonging.

SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNITY

Vamos Outdoors Project

Whatcom & Skagit Counties



GETTING YOUTH PROGRAMS ON THE MAP

Elevate Washington

The Elevate Washington data platform provides insights about programs that offer afterschool enrichment, youth services, and community resources for children and young people in Washington state. It's free for families to browse and free for providers to list.

elevatewashington.org

Find a program near you.

Use this free directory from School's Out Washington to search camps, classes, and support programs for children and young people (ages 5 to 24).

All categories

Search by keyword or phrase

City or zip code

Search

List a program

Washington's youth program landscape

Now in its 5th year of operation, Elevate Washington is helping SOWA and its partners gain a stronger statewide view of program opportunities and gaps.

This comprehensive data allows us to advocate for resources and provide families with an easy way to find programs in their area.

1,000 + Organizations

2,300 + Programs

2,000 + Sites

As a leading voice for youth development in Washington, SOWA advocates for policies and funding that advance educational justice.

ADVOCACY UPDATE

Building momentum!

Youth development workgroup lays groundwork for advocacy

Like any critical system, youth development requires resources, reliable data, and dedicated funding to deliver high-quality, equitable programming for Washington's youth. In 2022, a youth development workgroup was created to advise the Legislature, the Office of the Governor, and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) on the formation of statewide infrastructure for youth development in Washington. The workgroup included community-based organizations providing youth development programs as well as representatives from DCYF, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and people with lived experience in these systems. SOWA was a leading advocate for the formation of the workgroup and served as a key contributor throughout the process.

Youth Development Strategy Table: A statewide coalition for action

Running parallel to the working group efforts was our continued investment in The Youth Development Strategy Table, a coalition of stakeholders from the public and nonprofit sectors and from the broader community. SOWA leaned into its role as the backbone organization by providing the central administrative resources and leadership needed to steward and convene members and committees.

Looking ahead: 2023 legislative session preview

Following the release of the workgroup's recommendations report, SOWA facilitated six regional meetings to gather input from providers to craft an advocacy plan and formalize our 2023 legislative agenda. Our two bills (Senate Bill 5601 and House Bill 1386) passed out of their policy committees, but did not receive a vote in their respective budget committees.

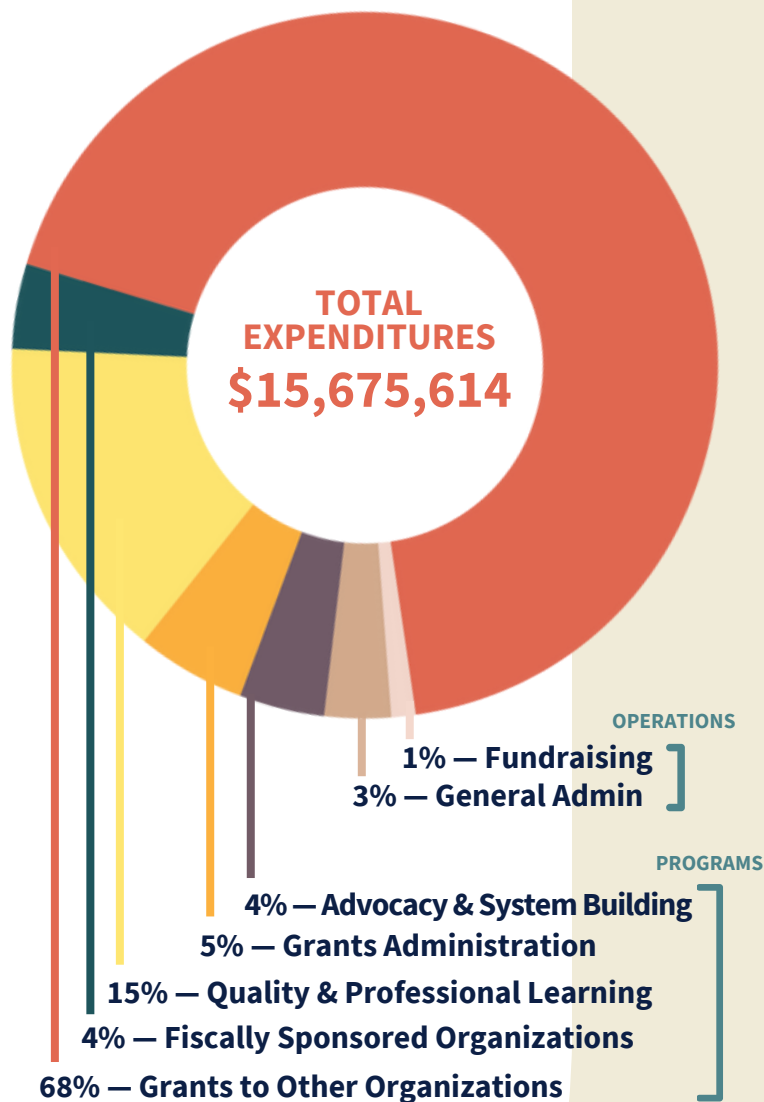
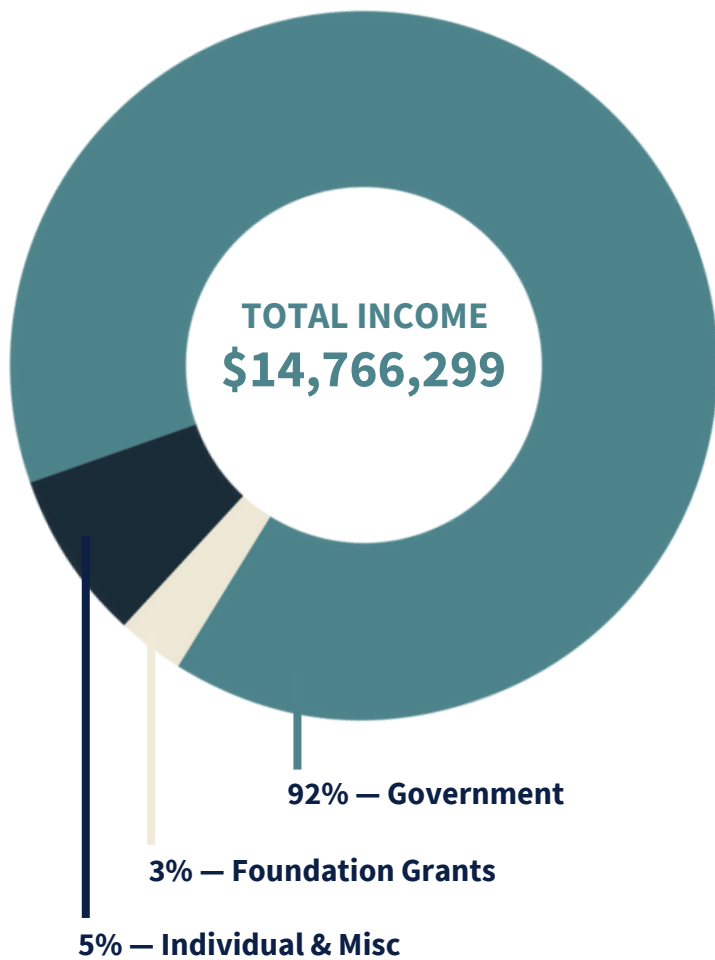
While we've been advocating in this space for a long time, our efforts were new to most legislators who have never seen us this coordinated or loud. Ultimately, this work requires a year or two of momentum building to solidify new legislation. Our first bill (HB1386), which included the 50M dollar youth development grant program passed UNANIMOUSLY in the House Committee. This initial step forward signals that, with sustained effort and increasing visibility, we can secure big wins for our sector in the coming years.

SOWA Staff

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Cerise Paone
Sabrina Shepherd
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2022 Financials



SOWA's impact in 2022

\$10.6 M
awarded to
250 organizations

2,561
individuals
trained

997
training
hours

1,136
coaching
hours

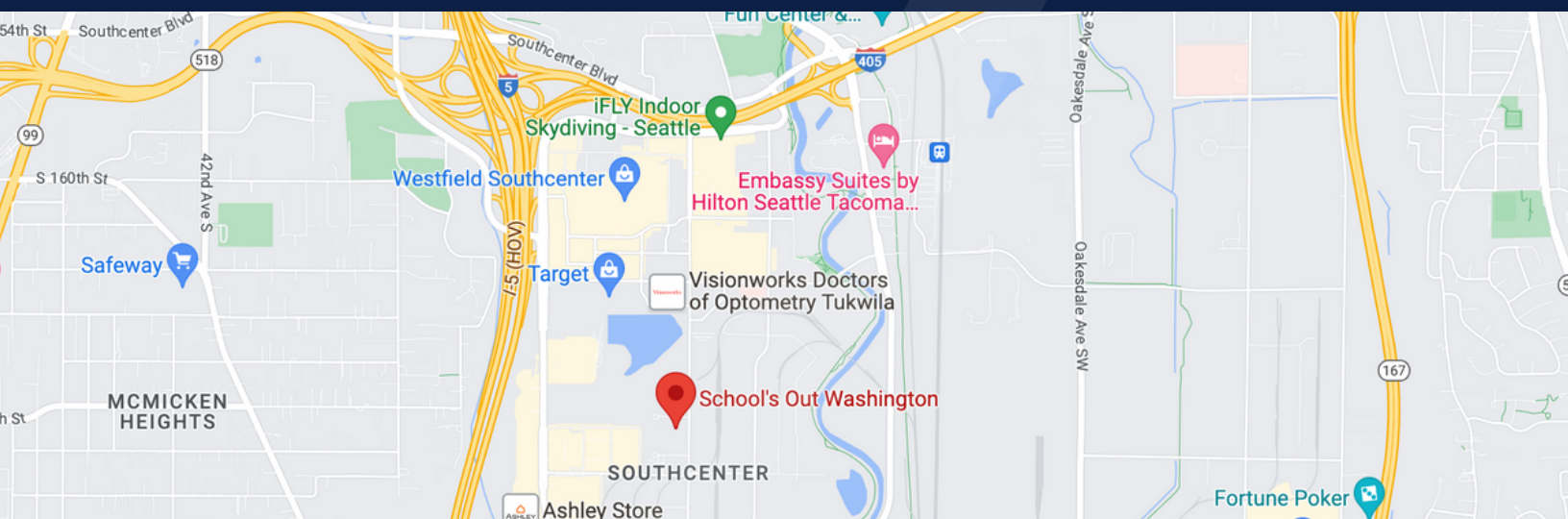
588
programs
strengthened

We moved!

NEW ADDRESS
625 Andover Park West
Suite #101
Tukwila, WA 98188



After 23 years in Seattle's Central District, SOWA has relocated to a new office in Tukwila. We spent the end of 2022 packing up and have settled comfortably into our new space where we've gathered for a staff retreat and conducted multiple in person training sessions.



Connect w/ us:

Email: info@schoolsoutwashington.org

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