



Institute *for* Social Policy
and Understanding

Thriving and Equal

// ANNUAL REPORT 2019 //

Photo by Syed Yaqeen



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OUR MISSION

The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) provides objective research and education about American Muslims to support *well-informed dialogue* and *decision-making*.

OUR VISION

At ISPU, we envision an America where Muslims are *thriving* and *equal*.

OUR VALUES

COLLABORATION

We actively seek to work with, not in competition against, others in the field.

ACTION

We conduct research to find solutions that are realistic and implementable.

RIGOR

Our research is objective, thorough, and evidence based.

RESPONSIVENESS

We conduct research on what is relevant *now* to American Muslim communities.

VISION

We continuously look for emerging challenges and opportunities.

EXCELLENCE

Quality and professionalism are key to all that we do.

Letter from the *executive director*

I OFTEN GET the opportunity to travel the country and stand in front of groups of ISPU supporters. From living rooms, to conference centers, to banquet halls, one old adage always comes to mind when I look at the people who have supported our work for almost two decades: “It takes a village to raise a child.” Or, in our case, an organization.

Because while we may have nine staff members, behind them is a brilliant board, an exceptional set of advisors and scholars, thousands of generous donors who have made our work possible, and thousands more partners who carry our work forward.

You are our village. You believe in us, you invest in our research, and you amplify it to reach the halls of Congress, the newsrooms of national media, the

schools where your children study, and so many other places. You are transforming American society at every level. And we need you now more than ever—because we have some big goals.

At ISPU, we want every decision, every conversation, and every action that affects American Muslims to be well-informed, and thus sound—whether among change makers at the highest levels or activists at the grassroots. Because of you, ISPU is able to rigorously research and widely share the facts that make this possible. We may be in the office day after day, but it is only through you that our work makes a transformative impact. And you’ve had quite an impact this year.

You’ve stepped in during times of crisis to inform decision-makers, like when

we shared data-driven recommendations for covering ideologically motivated violence after the mosque attack in New Zealand. You created safe and inclusive classrooms through our teacher workshops in Utah and Michigan. You informed policies that protect instead of harm, through data-sharing presentations to governors, members of Congress, and other policymakers. You multiplied ISPU’s impact through the training and launch of ISPU Educators, who bring our research to communities all over the country. You put relevant, rigorous research into thousands of hands in 2019.

This past year, the facts you discovered have fueled inclusion, progress, freedom, understanding, and community. They’ve fueled a future that looks brighter for all Americans. We wanted to look

back at what we accomplished together in 2019 and say thank you. Without you, there’s no ISPU. And for all Americans’ sake, we’re so grateful there is an ISPU.

Warmly,



Meira Neggaz
ISPU Executive Director

ISPU Educators

At ISPU, we believe rigorous research in the right hands can make change. In 2019, we equipped 11 more pairs of those right hands through a brand-new program: ISPU Educators. These official representatives of ISPU joined us in D.C. for intensive training in July and were given the tools to present our groundbreaking research in their own local and regional communities.

The ISPU Educators who completed our training course already serve as local community leaders, outreach educators, and interfaith partners. Now, they help fill a deep need for ISPU: fulfilling the dozens of speaking and training requests we receive annually around the country. This program will continue to vastly expand our ability to educate the general public and equip change makers.

In just six months following their training, the program succeeded far beyond our expectations. Our ISPU Educators have shared data in open- and closed-door meetings nationwide with thousands of policymakers, teachers, students, law enforcement officials, and the general public.



MARWA ABDALLA

📍 Southern California



AAMINA AHMED

📍 Detroit, Michigan



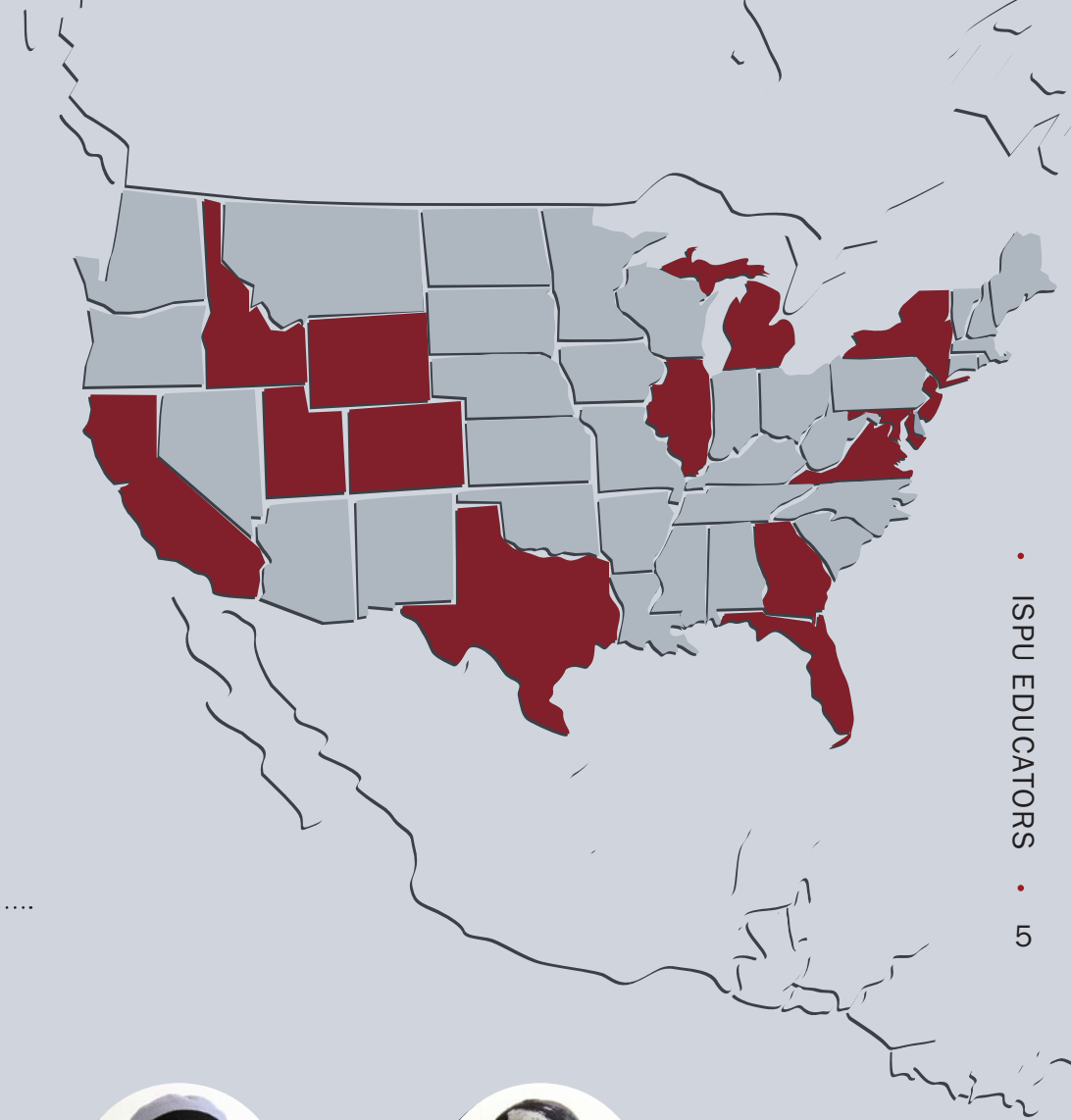
LUNA BANURI

📍 Utah / Wyoming /
Idaho / Colorado



SUZY ISMAIL

📍 Princeton, New
Jersey



AFRAZ KHAN

📍 New York, New York



AZKA MAHMOOD

📍 Atlanta, Georgia



HIND MAKKI

📍 Chicago, Illinois



CHRIS MURRAY

📍 Washington, D.C.



M. NAEEM NASH

📍 New York / New
Jersey



HASSAN SHIBLY

📍 Tampa, Florida



TARA ZAAFRAN

📍 Houston, Texas



AN EDUCATOR'S STORY

HE'LL NEVER DO IT AGAIN

Hassan Shibly returned home from the ISPU Educator workshop equipped with new tools and practical knowledge to use in his work as the executive director of CAIR-Florida. Hassan references ISPU facts almost daily, either internally with his team to inform organizational strategy or in his many meetings with media and elected officials.

Twice a week, Hassan uses ISPU research findings to train local law enforcement officials. These training sessions reached roughly 5,000 people in 2019 alone. At one such session, Hassan shared ISPU research about Muslim women and hijab, and an officer came up to him after. He told Hassan that a few years ago, he had pulled over a young Muslim college student for not paying a ticket. In the process, he removed her hijab while tears rolled down her face. That officer told Hassan that ISPU's research opened his eyes to the choices Muslim women make and the motivations behind those choices. With this greater understanding, he felt horrible and said that he would never do that again.

That's the power of research.



“I have worked as a speaker in the Muslim community and interfaith representative for over a decade, but the ISPU Educators program helped take my work to a whole new level. I now begin every presentation with data from ISPU—it lays the foundation and contextualizes whatever material I am presenting.”

MARWA ABDALLA



“[ISPU's] work is essential. We rely on it, and we would be tremendously disadvantaged without it.”

HASSAN SHIBLY



“The treasure trove of data ISPU provided greatly enhanced the effectiveness of my everyday work.”

SUZY ISMAIL

What we *discovered*

EVERY YEAR, our researchers undertake projects studying American Muslim opinions, demographics, contributions, family and wellness, community capacity building, and barriers to equality. These major undertakings are often years in the making and involve scores of researchers, advisors, and editors. This year, we're proud to have published three major reports, including a survey of Muslim college students, an analysis of faith-based philanthropic giving, and the fourth in-

stallment of our American Muslim Poll.

In January, we fielded questions for another edition of our annual American Muslim Poll, which included insights on civic engagement, faith, community, and the second-ever Islamophobia Index developed alongside Georgetown's Bridge Initiative. We revealed data on new topics and continued to track trends in this groundbreaking publication covered by outlets like *NPR*, *Salon*, *The Washington Post*, *CBS*, and many others. For the first time, our researchers used our data to form data-based recommendations for reducing Islamophobia and increasing Muslim civic engagement.

This year, we also partnered with MSA West to dig deep into the American Muslim college experience. We developed a

2019 SURVEY OF MSA WEST STUDENT MEMBERS

Published July 2019



“

ISPU's work is very profound. There's so much truth in what they do—even making our community put a mirror up and saying, 'This is what's going on.' I think that's critically important.

CONGRESSWOMAN RASHIDA TLAIB (MI-13)

MSA students in prayer at the annual MSA West conference in Irvine, CA



survey that was administered during an annual MSA West Conference at the University of California, Irvine. Since Muslim Student Associations (MSAs) are often an integral space for American Muslims' social, spiritual, and political development, they provide an important window into understanding the challenges and opportunities that young American Muslims face in uni-

versity settings. The resulting publication, *2019 Survey of MSA West Student Members: Perseverance in the Face of Adversity*, provides a snapshot of Muslim students' strengths and struggles and is useful for anyone involved in the professional and personal development of Muslim students.

To better understand faith-based giving, we analyzed questions about

philanthropy from our 2018 American Muslim Poll. The results were published in a July report titled *American Muslim Philanthropy: A Data-Driven Comparative Profile*. This report provides valuable insights into how and why Muslims give as a group, in comparison to other faith and non-faith groups. Here's one interesting finding: Muslims are one of the most likely groups to contribute to research organizations that study their community and contribute to well-informed decision-making and dialogue. That's over one-quarter of Muslims we surveyed who supported work like ISPU's!

In addition to this trio of publications, we dug deeper into our data to reveal insights into topics like private and public religiosity, poverty, abuse by faith leaders, internalized Islamophobia, interfaith marriage, nativity, and more. ISPU's work continues to cover a huge breadth of the American Muslim experience—and there's only more to come.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Campus MSA involvement is unrelated to confidence in one's faith, suggesting that **campus MSAs are welcoming to all Muslims** in different places on their spiritual journey.

2019 SURVEY OF MSA WEST STUDENT MEMBERS

- **Knowing a Muslim**, having positive views of other minorities, and knowing something about Islam are all tied to lower levels of Islamophobia.

AMERICAN MUSLIM POLL 2019

- American Muslims are most likely to be motivated to contribute to charitable causes by their sense of **religious duty** (17%) and the feeling that **those with more should help those with less** (20%).

AMERICAN MUSLIM PHILANTHROPY



Compelling testimony

Sadia Khan (far right) with the UC Berkeley MSA Political Action Committee

WE KNOW anecdotally that Muslim college students suffer from Islamophobia, but there was room to learn much more. So, ISPU partnered with MSA West to survey over 500 Muslim college students across California, gaining important insights on the well-being of a vulnerable and under-re-

searched population. What we discovered is already making an impact.

Sadia Khan is a legal studies major at UC Berkeley and a member of her campus' MSA Political Action Committee. In 2019, she testified on a panel at a California State Assembly hearing on campus climate. During her testimony, Sadia

shared with assembly members data from our report on how many Muslim students reported facing religious discrimination on campus both from professors (14.2% of respondents) and peers (31% of respondents).

“Islamophobia is something that has impacted my family and me directly for years. Most of my youth was filled with being called a terrorist by peers and teachers alike. From my brother’s football coach ‘joking’ that he needs to be searched for a bomb to being physically assaulted.” Sadia says.

“These incidents—no matter how numerous—were always overlooked. Had this research been available 10 years ago, it more than likely would have made a huge impact on how seriously these incidents were taken.”

Sadia says opening up in front of legislators was frightening, but she felt compelled to do so, so others don’t have

to suffer the same abuse as she did in school. And her testimony had immediate impact. “Assemblymember Shirley Weber actually jotted down the first stat and came back to it once everyone gave their statements,” Sadia says. “She shared her personal experience of being a professor and how much it hurt her to know the percentage of professors who were harming students instead of giving

them a space to excel.”

“Had this research been available 10 years ago, it more than likely would have made a *huge impact.*”

Danna Elneil, Programs Director at MSA West, describes the scene at the hearing, saying, “Her testimony nearly brought committee members to tears as they vowed to work towards developing stronger resources

for Muslim and other marginalized students on campuses.”

Immediately after Sadia’s testimony, MSA West was able to provide assembly members even more ISPU data from our collaborative report, ensuring sound research would inform policy.

How we *educated*

AT ISPU, we strive for every conversation and decision made about American Muslims to be evidence-based. And those conversations are being had not just by decision-makers at the highest levels, but also in living rooms, libraries, and Twitter feeds. ISPU aims to get into each of these spaces to share our facts with everyday Americans, and 2019 was a banner year for reaching that goal. Let's recap:

Public education events are one of the cornerstones of our work. In May, we debuted the fourth annual American Muslim Poll at New York University–D.C., where we returned in June for a public conversation with experts on the anniversary of the Muslim Ban Supreme Court decision. We continue to turn to experts to discuss our core research areas, like in our November fire-side chat on Islamophobia with Debbie Almontaser in Michigan. Our researchers shared our Muslims for American Progress data on Muslim contributions to America at events across New York City, including a Black History Month event at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and a Ramadan panel discussion at the Tenement Museum.

We reached thousands at conferences like ICNA MAS, MAS ICNA, and ISNA;

AMERICAN MUSLIM POLL 2019

Published May 2019



“

I cannot help but think that a lot of people failed at what ISPU accomplished, simply because they were busy finding problems while ISPU was busy finding solutions.

HANI ALMADHOUN // Director of Philanthropy,
UNRWA USA National Committee

ISPU Executive Director Meira Neggaz on an expert panel at Gordon College



ISPU Scholar Elisabeth Becker presenting research at St. John the Divine in New York City (Photo by Syed Yaqeen)

colleges like UC Santa Barbara, Gordon College, Wheaton College, and Essex County College; and community centers all over the country. And our power to educate was multiplied after our inaugural July ISPU Educators training, which increased our capacity to reach American communities more than tenfold. (Read more about our ISPU Educators on pages 5–6.)

Because we know we can't reach everyone in person, we shared our research in live streams, webinars, Twitter town halls, and numerous social media posts. In both physical and digital spaces, ISPU spent 2019 relentlessly educating people on issues impacting American Muslims.

All told, last year we directly educated

over 21,000 people with original research through almost 100 different learning opportunities. On ISPU.org, more than 90,000 people accessed our resources and tens of thousands more found it through the 680 mentions in newspapers, magazines, blogs, and TV and radio shows.

DID YOU KNOW?

21,346

people came to an ISPU event in 2019, where they learned facts about American Muslims and the issues that impact them.

- In February, we organized a Black History Month event in Harlem.

680

pieces of media cited our research, reaching millions of eyes.

- In April, our director of research appeared on MSNBC to discuss our Islamophobia research after the Christchurch mosque tragedy.

35,800+

people connected with ISPU online through social media and email newsletters.

- In October, we hosted a Twitter town hall with five experts to discuss structural Islamophobia.

STORY OF IMPACT



Loving neighbors

Kevin Singer and Petra Alsoofy, ISPU's outreach and partnerships manager, at the Wheaton conference

KEVIN SINGER, co-founder and director of Neighborly Faith, says ISPU is a vital partner in the work to bring Christians and Muslims together across America. “We use [ISPU research] all the time to make a case for loving our Muslim neighbors as they really are, not who we think they are.”

ISPU joined Neighborly Faith for several events at Christian colleges in 2019, including a two-day conference at Wheaton College where Evangelical students gathered from across the country to learn how to build meaningful relationships with their Muslim neighbors.

“It is vital that we reach young Evangelicals and help them better understand who American Muslims really are,” Kevin says. “At Wheaton, ISPU shared data on such things as the diversity of Muslims in America, information on why some Muslim women choose to wear hijab, and the best ways to combat Islamophobia.”

“We use it all the time to make a case for loving our Muslim neighbors *as they really are*, not who we think they are.”

ISPU research shows that white Evangelicals are less likely than people of other faiths to know a Muslim, and they are more likely to believe Islamophobic stereotypes. So, Neighborly Faith administers surveys to see how attendees are impacted by what they hear. Among those who identified as conservative Evangelical students, 49% had neutral or somewhat

negative attitudes toward Muslims coming into the conference. Afterward, only 6% remained neutral, and none had a negative attitude.

ISPU Board Member Gasby Brown says, “As an Evangelical Christian, I know how important

it is to educate our youth about the diversity of America, particularly about similarly passionate people of faith. For many Evangelical students, it will be their first encounter with Muslims or with unbiased facts about Islam. There has never been a more critical moment for these encounters to occur.”

Who we *equipped*

AT ISPU, we proactively reach out to journalists, policymakers, community leaders, teachers, advocates, and many others to strengthen their own work with our resources. Equipping others multiplies our impact as the data lives on in the work of those who catalyze change.

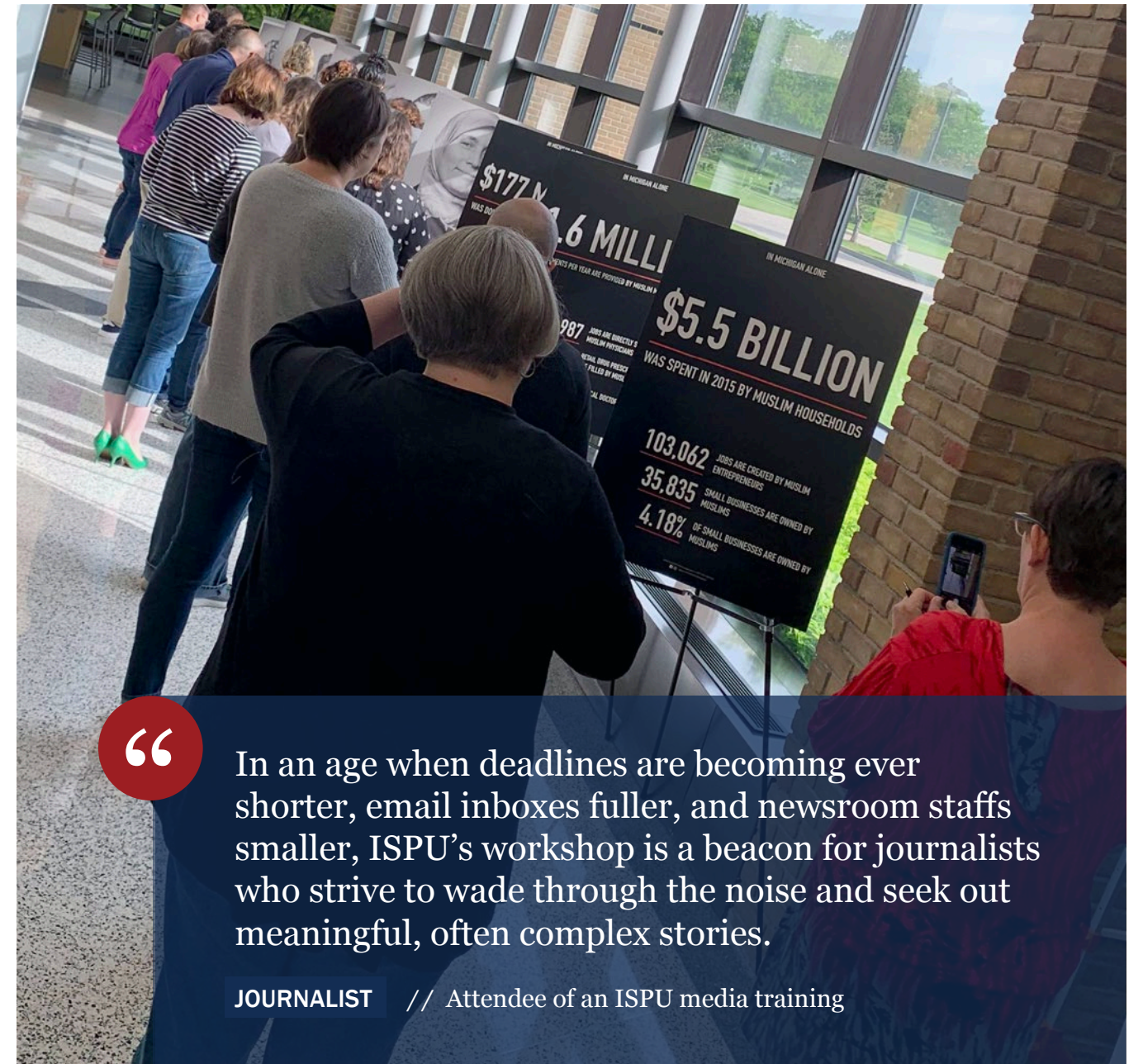
With your support and partnership, we equipped 2,712 leaders and 1,789 institutions with new information, evidence-based recommendations, and tools throughout 2019.

That number includes attendees of our ongoing trainings for educators, journalists, and interfaith leaders. ISPU partnered with a number of school districts to organize and hold day-long training courses where teachers earned continuing education credits and were

equipped with data on American Muslims and their diversity of experiences.

For journalists, ISPU hosted interactive, evidence-based workshops that provided a deep dive into insightful research and usable information about American Muslims. These workshops alleviated pressure on reporters thrust into covering issues related to American Muslims and connected journalists with expert sources and original research.

And through partnerships with interfaith organizations such as the Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign and Neighborly Faith, ISPU shared research at trainings for faith leaders, lay leaders, and multi-faith or faith-based organizational leaders committed to countering anti-Muslim discrimination in their communities.



In an age when deadlines are becoming ever shorter, email inboxes fuller, and newsroom staffs smaller, ISPU's workshop is a beacon for journalists who strive to wade through the noise and seek out meaningful, often complex stories.

JOURNALIST // Attendee of an ISPU media training

Teachers and administrators at an ISPU training in Salt Lake City, Utah



ISPU Director of Research Dalia Mogahed and ISPU Scholar Kumar Rao bring research to Senator Kamala Harris's office

In addition to planned trainings, we proactively reached out to decision-makers to equip them with our research. This year, we briefed policymakers like Representative André Carson, Governor Greg Abbott, and members of Senator Kamala Harris's office. As the 2020 presidential race heated up, we participated in research-sharing con-

versations with candidates like Senator Elizabeth Warren, Governor Jay Inslee, Mayor Bill de Blasio, and former Vice President Joe Biden.

During open- and closed-door meetings, we shared research with representatives from organizations like Facebook, CAIR-National, Southern

Poverty Law Center (SPLC), Western States Center, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative, Muslim Advocates, Advocates for Youth, Veterans for American Ideals, Arab American Institute, and America Indivisible, among thousands more.

DID YOU KNOW?



2,712

national, state, and local policymakers and community leaders received ISPU's vital resources and information.



3,435

reports were downloaded from the ISPU website in 2019.



1,789

institutions—including schools, mosques, and media outlets—benefited from workshops infused with ISPU research.

STORY OF IMPACT



The ripple effects

Dua Abudiab, Esq., and Pastor Terry Kylo

TERRY KYLLO is a Lutheran pastor working to counter anti-Muslim hate groups in the Pacific Northwest. Earlier this year, he used ISPU's *Equal Treatment?* research as the basis for a training held by the Washington Bar Association at the Access to Justice Conference. Those present, both judges and lawyers, gained a deeper understanding of the discrepancies in how Muslims are treated within the legal system as compared to non-Muslims accused of similar crimes.

With ISPU's research as a foundation, that group discussed ways to counter anti-Muslim bias in the courts. But it wasn't a one-off event. In fact, Terry has used ISPU's research in every one of the 275 presentations he has done in Washington state.

"I use the work of ISPU every day in my work of countering Islamophobia in Washington state," Terry says. "Ev-

ery single presentation I give includes information and graphics from the research of ISPU. I consider ISPU's staff as nearly constant conversation partners in continually learning how to do this work—and why it is important for our world, our nation, our communities, and ourselves."

"ISPU's work helped them to understand the practical implications of our common value of *equal treatment* under law."

After his presentations of data from *Equal Treatment?*, Terry says, he engaged in several conversations with lawyers and judges.

"Many of them expressed not only support for my work but that their new awareness about bias toward Muslims and those perceived to be

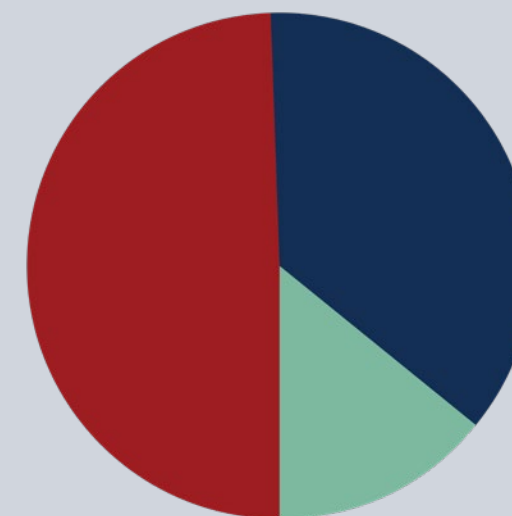
Muslim would impact their daily work," he says. "ISPU's work helped them to understand the practical implications of our common value of equal treatment under law."

Thanks to Terry, the ripple effects of ISPU's work extend far and deep.

Our finances

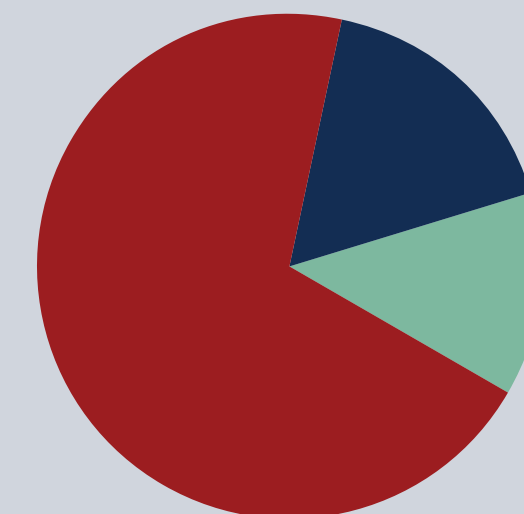
	2019	2018
	audited	audited
REVENUE		
Institutional grants*	\$480,174	\$602,250
Individual contributions	354,735	380,785
Event revenue (net of expenses)	142,457	102,174
In-kind donations	4,469	1,752
Other	7,651	1,262
Total revenue	989,486	1,088,223
EXPENSES		
Programs/research	\$686,160	\$716,566
Fundraising	168,923	201,527
Administration	122,274	111,427
Total expenses	977,357	1,029,520
ASSETS		
Net assets (beginning of year)	\$997,942	\$939,240
Net assets (end of year)	1,010,071	997,942
Change in net assets*	12,129	58,702

REVENUE



- Foundations // 49%
- Individuals // 36%
- Events // 14%

EXPENSES



- Programs // 70%
- Fundraising // 17%
- Administration // 13%

* ISPU was awarded several multi-year grants to be expended in subsequent years. Following generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), the entire amount of the granted funds were recorded as income in previous years while the expenses were recorded throughout the life of the multi-year grants.

Your *support*

FRIENDS, YOUR support makes our work possible every day. From our monthly sustainers to the founders of our Legacy Circle of Excellence (LCE) to every donor who has been with us over our nearly 20 year history, we appreciate you.

Through your donations, you've made it possible for ISPU to actively discover, educate, and equip others through our research. Every time you use our research to empower your local community and improve our country, every time you have a conversation about our discoveries, and every time you make a gift, you partner with ISPU. And it makes such a difference.

Moving forward into 2020 and beyond, we look forward to partnering with you even further and seeing what an im-

pact we can continue to make with your support. We are lucky to have you at our side as we move forward with even greater impact in this next decade.

Thank you!



Michelle Gale
ISPU Director of Development



Donor support is invaluable. I wish our community had had access to this quality of information years ago!

ZAYNAB ANSARI

// Faculty and Female Resident Scholar at Tayseer Seminary

INTRODUCING...

THE LEGACY CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE

While other organizations come and go, ISPU withstands the test of time. We take our unique role seriously, and for that reason, a small group of supporters emerged in 2019 with a vision to invest in ISPU's work. These friends of ISPU are founders of a new initiative, leaving a legacy for their children and grandchildren and building upon the work of our first two decades. We've dubbed this important initiative the Legacy Circle of Excellence (LCE), made up of ISPU's close friends who seek to fund our essential work for the next decade and beyond. Interested in learning more? We'd love to share the details.

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED PLANNED GIVING?

What kind of legacy do you want to leave? Do you, like ISPU, envision an America where Muslims are thriving and equal members of vibrant communities all across this land, where communities are empowered with facts to develop, grow, and flourish, and where national conversations about American Muslims are built on a foundation of facts, not fear? Thoughtful planning now can ensure that future. Through a planned gift, you have the opportunity to make a lasting difference for years to come. A planned gift can be made during your lifetime or through an estate plan. Check with your financial adviser to find out the many options you have for making a planned gift. Or connect with us—we would love to work with you.



Meet our team

STAFF

Meira Neggaz, Executive Director
 Dalia Mogahed, Director of Research
 Nadia Ahmed, Director of Finance
 Amal Beydoun, Senior Development Manager (partial)
 Katherine Coplen, Director of Communications
 Michelle Gale, Director of Development (partial)
 Petra Alsoofy, Outreach & Partnerships Manager
 Erum Ikramullah, Research Project Manager
 Katie Grimes, Communication & Creative Media Specialist
 Nancy Titus, Administrative Assistant

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Elisabeth Becker	Lance Laird	Asma Uddin
Alejandro Beutel	Nazita Lajevardi	John Voll
Khaled Beydoun	Erik Love	Radwan Ziadeh
Louise Cainkar	Julie Macfarlane	
Youssef Chouhoud	Faiqa Mahmood	

Ways to get involved



JOIN

our community by signing up for our newsletter at ispu.org/sign-up.



INVEST

in the future by supporting our work at ispu.org/donate.



PARTNER

with us by using our research and tools in your own work.

Stay in touch

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“



Hisham Tawfiq and Nicole Najmah Abraham at ISPU's Black History Month event in Harlem (Photo by Syed Yaqeen)

“ISPU’s hard facts were what I truly needed to present to my audience as we discussed Black History Month.

I could see the faces of my panelists and audience **brighten with surprise and amazement** that there could be such well done research on a matter of interest for Muslims in America.

I am not surprised, as I always use [ISPU’s] data and research and find them so instrumental, enlightening, and invaluable.”

IMAM HASSAN SELIM

// Islamic Center of Cedar Rapids