

GRATITUDE



2021-22
ANNUAL REVIEW

Letter from Zamir Choral Foundation Founder & Director, Matthew Lazar

Dear Members of the Zamir Family,

This past year has been nothing short of uplifting for those who benefit from Zamir’s “*klal yisrael* through music” mission, as well as those of us who work to bring that mission to reality.



Emails, letters, phone calls and Zoom all play important roles in creating communication and community. But ultimately, it is the human to human, face to face interactions that bring us together—especially for those of us for whom singing together, making music together or even watching others do the same, brings us joy, calm, inspiration and motivation.

This past year, we finally had the opportunity to once again rehearse, perform and actually be together, while giving voice to our emotional and intellectual experiences. All of our programs, HaZamir, HaZaPrep, Zamir Noded, Zamir Chorale and the North American Jewish Choral Festival, were able to resume in-person activity, which reminded us - this time in a positive way - of what deep-down, we knew we had been missing: a pluralistic, welcoming and uplifting community, bonding through music and words. Our hope was reactivated and fulfilled as we returned to Merkin Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center and the NAJCF hotel.

When all is right, the Zamir Choral Foundation brings a vast array of people together to breathe, think and sing, creating one community. Then we merge this same community with the larger world, empowering an ever-increasing number of people

with trans-generational, trans-political and trans-denominational Jewish hope.

Our momentum is carrying into this coming year. We’re celebrating our past, present and future: the 400th anniversary of the publication of the magnum opus of the first important Jewish composer, our hero, Salamone Rossi; the 75th anniversary of the Second Jewish Commonwealth- the State of Israel; the 10th anniversary of Zamir Noded and the 30th anniversary of HaZamir: The International Jewish Teen Choir. All in the same year!

I’m filled with gratitude for what we share, with whom we share it and the awareness of this confluence of meaning, ALL of which could not be accomplished without your generosity, support and understanding!

Thank you for helping us “renew our days as of yore” —or at least pre-pandemic.

We are so grateful that during the hardest days of this challenging time, our Zamir community has stood by us steadfastly as we have shared ourselves, our optimism, and our talents with you. Enjoy the review of this past year. We look forward to seeing you all during this current year!

B'Shalom,

Mati

Matthew Lazar, Founder and Director

Letter from the Board President

Dear Friends,

As President of the Zamir Choral Foundation, it is both a pleasure and an honor to greet you and wish you all well.

My own association with Zamir goes back to the late 1960s, when I first joined the Zamir Chorale. I remember, as if it were yesterday, the thrill of being a part of making that amazing sound, singing the music of our people. For someone like me, who grew up learning to love the music of a still very young Israel, it was a dream come true.



Of course, in the ensuing years, what was then one inter-collegiate choir has, via the Zamir Choral Foundation and our remarkable Founder and Director Matthew Lazar, evolved into a choral powerhouse. The Zamir Chorale, Zamir Noded for college-age singers, HaZamir: The International Jewish Teen Choir, The North American Jewish Choral Festival, which brings together people from all over the country... all of these platforms, under the aegis of the Foundation, have served to continue to promote both the love of, and the performance of, the music of our people. And of course, through it all, Zamir has continued to nurture a love of the State of Israel that is meta-political and meta-religious. No matter where you find your place in the Zionist enterprise, the Zamir Choral

Foundation will always be your warm and welcoming home.

I am pleased to represent the Board of Directors in saying how very grateful we are to all of you, each and every one of our donors, for enabling us to continue functioning at the highest possible level in what can only be referred to as “challenging times.” From the worst days of the pandemic, when the act of singing itself was deemed dangerous, to today’s slow but steady re-entry into an easier mode of operation, your continued support has enabled us to “keep singing” when other choral communities have found that struggle beyond their capabilities. We were able to meet our fundraising goals last year, and our ambitious schedule of events this year has positioned us to reach even greater heights.

As legendary Israeli singer (and past honoree of our Foundation) Yehoram Gaon sang in the mid-1970s, “*Lo Nafsik Lashir*.” We shall not stop singing. That song helped sustain Israel through some of its greatest challenges, and in a real sense, it represents a statement of faith on the part of the Zamir Choral Foundation. We shall never stop singing, and helping others to sing along with us.

Thank you to all of you!

Gerald C. Skolnik

Rabbi Gerald C. Skolnik, Board President

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Save-the-Dates

Sunday, December 18 at 7:30 pm – Merkin Hall
Zamir Chorale and Zamir Noded
Celebrate Hanukkah & Israel at 75

Sunday, March 19, 2023 at 3:00 pm – Jazz at Lincoln Center
HaZamir 30th Anniversary Gala Concert
Celebrating Israel at 75

Sunday, July 9 – Thursday, July 13, 2023
North American Jewish Choral Festival

July 30 - August 6, 2023
Israel @75 Mission to Israel
Pre-Mission Option from 7/26-7/30
Let’s Sing Through Israel & Celebrate

For Questions or To Sign Up Now:
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OUR MISSION

The Zamir Choral Foundation, created by Matthew Lazar, promotes choral music as a vehicle to inspire Jewish life, literacy, community, and connection to Israel. The Zamir Choral Foundation is guided by an expansive vision of vibrant Jewish identity across the generational, denominational and political continuums through the study and performance of Jewish music at the highest level of excellence.

Zamir is committed to:

- **Community:** Pluralism and respect are immutable foundational values for us. The only thing that distinguishes us is that we are sopranos, altos, tenors or basses.
- **Jewish literacy:** Because choral music incorporates text, singers learn Jewish history, culture and traditions through the pieces they sing.
- **Excellence:** We work towards the highest level of music education and performance.
- **Love of Israel:** Zamir believes that musical partnerships and face-to-face relationships create friendships that last a lifetime and ensure continued strengthening and support for the Jewish state. Zamir has been going to Israel since 1967 for performance tours and missions, and for the past 15 years HaZamir has created meaningful connections between HaZamir singers in Israel and the United States.
- **Changing lives:** Singing is a source of joy, healing, strength and unity. Unbreakable bonds of friendship are created and a lasting Jewish community is built.

HaZamir

A Jewish Musical Youth Movement



And the HaZaWordle word was TUTTI

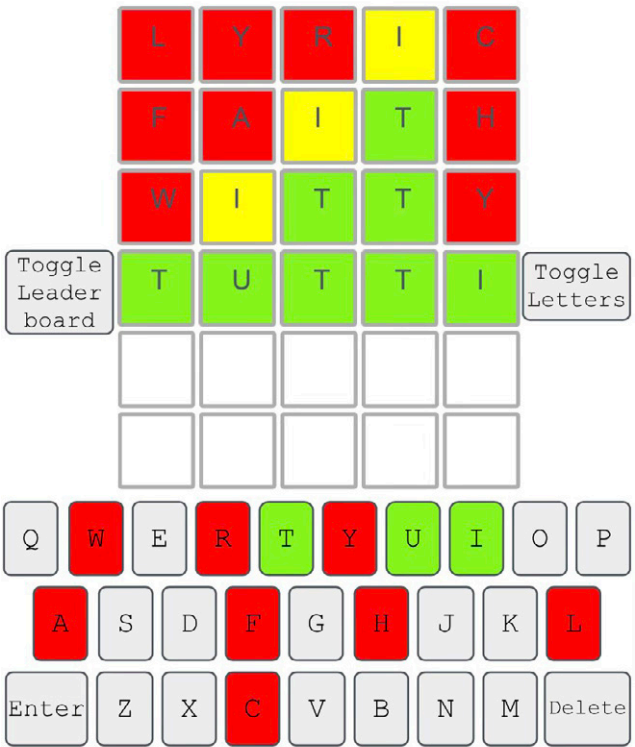
By Carol W. Kopelman, Zamir Choral Foundation Board Member

I had the privilege of spending 3 nights and 3 days with 350 high school members of HaZamir at its annual HaZamir Festival in Stamford, CT. This experience points the way for us to reimagine Jewish engagement, community, and education.

There is a saying in the world of summer camp: “Life is 10 for 2”. Kids wait ten months of the year for the two months of camp, where they have the time of their lives. HaZamir, by contrast, provides an ongoing experience in which they are together for ten months of the year, bonding, rehearsing, singing, learning and socializing, all the while, enjoying, enjoying, enjoying! If summer camp is an important predictor for Jewish children to remain Jewish and become involved in their community, HaZamir

serves this same purpose as a program in which teens become part of an inclusive peer community of inspiring study and inspired performance, and has proved to be a significant factor in teens’ future Jewish choices. Because they are learning text and music in an integrated way, while reflecting upon the meaning of the lyrics and texts on their lives, they grow stronger as Jews and as young adults, preparing to contribute to the world. The HaZamir Festival is the focused moment in which the music, which had already been learned, was brought to an even higher level, with added nuance and blending. The teens took such pride in the sound each one contributed to the whole, teaching them an important and vivid lesson about the relationship between individual and community.

But this past Festival was different. Covid has changed the dynamics of teen programming, and in our case, the return to in-person gathering meant that, unlike in previous years, only 25% of the HaZamir teens knew one another and had attended a previous Festival. But by the end of the Festival, new and strong friendships were made, voices were improved, pieces were learned and music was made and refined. Watching the, at first hesitant, then increasingly confident steps toward friendship that took place over those three days and nights brought tears to my eyes. We are so grateful to our teens, their families, and our conductors and parent coordinators for their willingness to be open and vulnerable together. The Jewish future looks bright, and it has a fantastic soundtrack!



Congratulations! You finished HaZamirdle in 4 guesses! Now go study your music.

HaZaWordle App created by Sam Sokol (HaZamir, Long Island)

HaZamir Teen Leadership

By Emma Miller, Teen Leadership Coordinator

HaZamir Teen Leadership is a rigorous, transformative, application-and-interview based experiential leadership lab for a select cohort of HaZamir upper-classmen. Through values-driven experiential learning, Teen Leaders build a cohesive, tight-knit community – a microcosm of HaZamir, and of the Jewish community – and learn to think big about who they are and what kind of leader they might want to be. Teen Leaders participate in immersive retreats, interactive training, and project-based learning. They receive in-depth, personalized mentorship that nurtures and empowers them as emerging leaders. Teen Leaders set the tone for their fellow HaZamir singers as they empower and unite their peer community. Participation in HaZamir Teen Leadership gives Teen Leaders a place to build and hone skills, to think deeply about identity, and to practice and refine their leadership skills. Teen Leaders emerge as confident, caring future leaders of the Jewish world.

2021-2022 was a year of reconnection and return for the cohort of 39 Teen Leaders. After more than a year of meeting virtually, Teen Leaders “came home,” in physical space for rehearsals and much-awaited retreats. They participated in three training retreats in the United States and in Israel, and served as facilitators and ambassadors at *Kenes HaZamir* (Israel retreat), InterVis, and Festival. On retreats, Teen Leaders learn in a powerful, immersive environment and tap into content-rich training, exploration, and meaningful growth. As Teen Leaders celebrate Shabbat, engage in sessions, and participate in activities together, they learn to balance taking and making space, practice using their voices, and hone in on what it means to collaborate. At the end of the Shabbaton, a Teen Leader from HaZamir Dimona shared: “I am speechless from how much joy and connectedness I’ve felt over the last two days. Being a Teen Leader has given me a chance to appreciate my best qualities and practice the things I need to improve on. I feel so at home and pushed to be my best self.”

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—HaZamir Israel Teen Leader



In addition to their role as activity facilitators in their chapters each week, Teen Leaders spend their year investigating pluralism, design thinking, awareness, active listening, radical hospitality, empathy, creativity, resilience, accountability, and impact. They carry out a “HaZaGiveback” service project, which they own fully from concept to creation, and develop and test initiatives meant to enhance and elevate the HaZamir experience. Teen Leadership – as a cohort community, as a learning lab, and as a HaZamir experience – shapes the lives of its participants, arming them with tools and empowering them to lead wherever their futures take them and inspiring them to give back to the HaZamir community – and to the broader Jewish community.

HaZamir Israel

September 2021 started a thrilling return for Israeli HaZamirniks, their parents, and community members. HaZamir Israel is gaining real traction and growing its capacity.

In 2021 a new staff professional joined HaZamir Israel. Herzl Yona, former CEO of the major municipal Community Center of Beit Shean for close to 25 years, is now managing all legal areas and budgets for HaZamir Israel and actively advocates for the organization in his capacity as community relations and communications expert. Herzl has said about HaZamir “HaZamir is not just about what kids get from the program, but what they give back to each other and their communities through the program.” He understands the value that comes with Israeli teens collaborating so closely with American teens, sharing similarities and learning from each other’s differences.

A consequence of the pandemic saw HaZamir Israel bond, nationally, as singers from the north and south of the country, as well as those in the center, met as a diverse group of teens. It is rare for Israeli teens from the periphery cities to interact with teens from the center. The rich learning that evolved from the many interactions among all HaZamir Israel teens led to a greater understanding of diversity and a respect for those who come from different cultural and economic strata.

All of HaZamir Israel had the incredible opportunity to come to the United States for Festival and sing at the Gala Concert at Jazz at Lincoln Center for the first time in 2 years. Israeli teens experienced a pluralistic Shabbat and learned about the many different forms of worship in America. The friendships made across cultural and denominational lines at Festival, through facilitated encounters between Israeli and American teens, forged bonds of understanding and friendship that continue through Facetime and Zoom.

This trip to the States reinforced the understanding of the heterogeneous nature of the Jewish People, something that is not always understood in Israel.

Before the Israelis left America they visited a New York area Jewish day school and performed multiple times that day. They were strong ambassadors for Israel, having open and deep conversations with the student body. This is the way that North American teens and Israeli teens can build lasting bonds of connection and understanding.



“No one is doing what HaZamir is doing in Israel. Using music as a universal language to engage Israeli and American teens in meaningful conversations around identity, peoplehood and Zionism. And doing it in a way that is loving, fun and unforgettable.”

—Adina Avery Grossman,
HaZamir alumni parent,
and Zamir Choral Foundation
board member



HaZaPrep, the middle school preparatory arm of HaZamir, joyously gathered for the first time in two years for a day-long national retreat and performance on Feb. 27, 2022. Singers from chapters across the Northeast traveled to participate in a full day of rehearsing, socializing over meals, making friends, and performing a national repertoire that they had all been rehearsing in their individual chapters.

Some of these students had only previously met each other over Zoom. They “grew up” during the pandemic and were incredibly excited to be able to gather for this national retreat and sing, for the first time, in a larger ensemble.

HaZaPrep singers had the rare opportunity to work with a wide variety of talented conductors. The multi-talented HaZaPrep conductors also accompanied the national ensemble on instruments from piano and violin to guitar and accordion. A live audience provided enthusiastic feedback to an ensemble that had grown up in isolation. The 8th grade graduates of HaZaPrep reported excited anticipation about auditioning for HaZamir in the fall.



HaZamir alumni are making an extraordinary impact on the future of the Jewish community as professional and lay leaders and as musical leaders.

Many alumni enter the cantorate. This year alone there are five HaZamir alumni studying for the cantorate and several others who are already cantors or rabbis- or both- in cities in the U.S. contributing to communal life around the U.S.

Mira Davis and Benjamin Sokol are two such alumni. Benjy, who is getting his masters in voice at Manhattan School of Music, is also a cantorial student and Mira graduated cantorial school a few years ago and is a practicing cantor in New York City. Both are immersed in a variety of musical styles and we were privileged to hear them perform from the Broadway Songbook at a leadership donor event at the North American Jewish Choral Festival. They entertained the audience with duet and solo standards with the star quality that comes from HaZamir training.



Additionally, both Mira and Benjy are members of our young adult choir, Zamir Noded, which alumni and non-alumni are welcome to join. In December of 2021 Zamir Noded appeared with The Zamir Chorale, the Foundation’s adult choir, at Merkin Hall. These two choirs together create a multi-generational platform of Jewish choral music enthusiasts.

Zamir Choral Foundation is so pleased to be able to keep our American and Israeli alumni active by inviting them to sing at the HaZamir gala and at the Israel gala every spring. More than 60 alumni performed as an alumni ensemble on the stage of Jazz at Lincoln Center in March

of 2021 and more than 30 Israeli alumni, including those who could get released from the IDF, appeared on the stage in Jerusalem in June. Additionally, alumni come back for a reunion every January and many attend the North American Jewish Choral Festival. This year close to 25 alumni came to the incredible five day NAJCF experience.

Young Conductor Training Program

The Zamir Choral Foundation is committed to investing in the future of Jewish choral music by training the next generation of Jewish choral conductors. Matthew Lazar held a series of full day workshops during the season and offered the Young Conductor Fellowship at the North American Jewish Choral Festival. This year, nine young conductors participated in the winter workshop and another ten received fellowships to NAJCF where they studied with Matthew and were immersed in five days of rich choral activity.

To date, 13 HaZamir alumni have assumed leadership roles as conductors or coordinators of HaZamir or HaZaPrep chapters.

Conductor training is an essential component to

Zamir’s vision of creating a solidly sustainable Jewish choral movement. Zamir Choral Foundation is building the next generation of choral singers and musical leaders, and alumni involvement is key to our success.



NAJCF: North American Jewish Choral Festival

Grateful to Gather, Learn, and Sing



This past summer was the 33rd North American Jewish Choral Festival; five full days of choral singing, performances, rehearsals, music workshops, and just being together! We are so grateful to all the people who came to sing again after two years of non-traditional Festivals!

Our incredible annual NAJCF program consists of a rich variety of activities including community sings, instant ensembles, workshops and evening performances.

Community Sings provide opportunities for the entire Festival community to quickly learn a new piece of music. This year we were especially fortunate to feature a new selection, composed for NAJCF by

our 2022 Hallel V’Zimrah honoree, Nick Page.

The Instant Ensembles prototype was introduced after the first NAJCF. It allows individual singers who do not attend with a choir to join an “instant” choir, based on their musical level. The ensembles rehearse seven times during the course of the Festival, and then present a choir-to-choir performance on the last morning of the event. In 2022 each of the four ensembles presented a piece by Nick Page, the Festival honoree, as well as selections by 2006 *Hallel V’Zimrah* honoree, Yehezkel Braun, who would have celebrated his 100th birthday this year.

Evening performances demonstrate the diversity of our Jewish choral community with concerts by

visiting choirs and musicians. In addition to these choirs, late night performances featured two special ensembles: Galit Dardashti and Divahn, and Basya Schechter and Pharoah’s Daughter.

Over 30 Festival workshops are offered each year, providing a wide array of learning opportunities. Some workshops are “one-shot” sessions, while others like Jewish Music Around the World, the Music of Israel or Vocal Health, are presented as “triple workshops” to enable interested participants to more deeply explore different perspectives on a single topic.

NAJCF is for everyone. Come join us on July 9-13, 2023!

“It was great being at the Festival after three long years. So wonderful to reconnect with old friends in song, even more wonderful to make new ones. Each year the Festival fills my heart!”
—Dr. Mark Schatz, NAJCF attendee

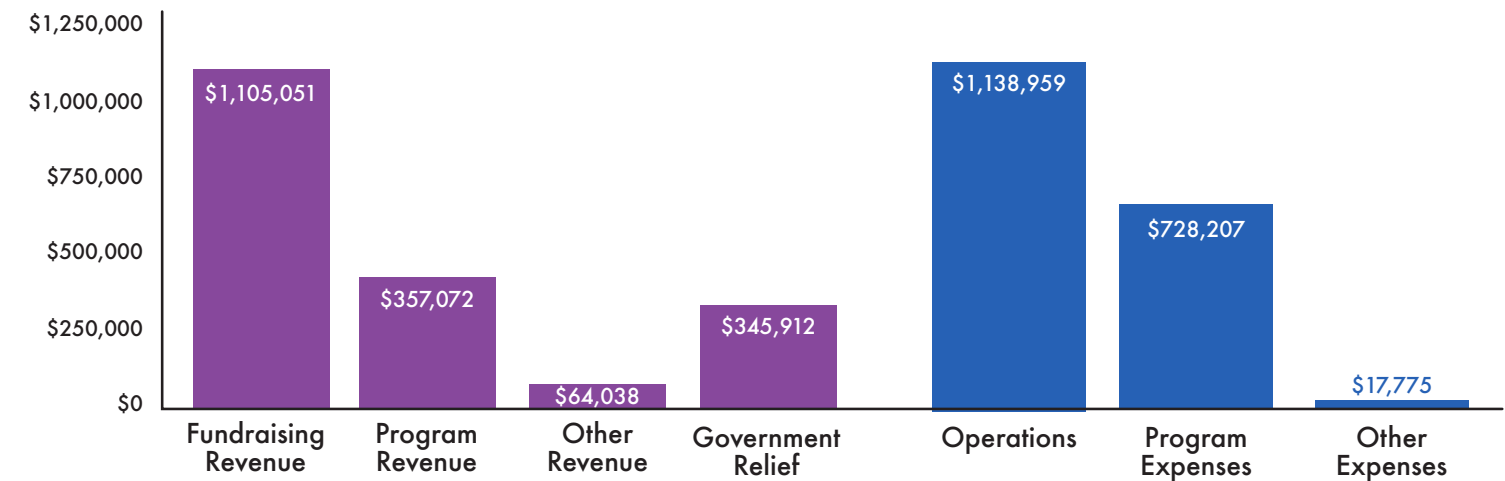
VIDEO

**The World is Made of Sound;
A Conversation between
Matthew Lazar and Nick Page.**
[Click to watch](#)

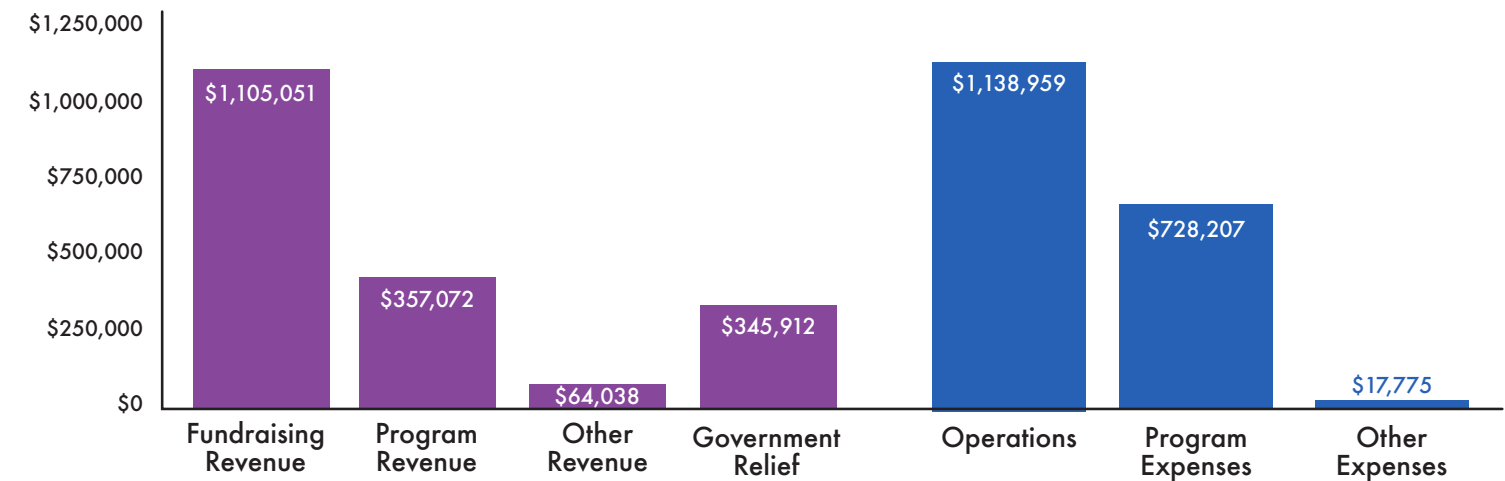


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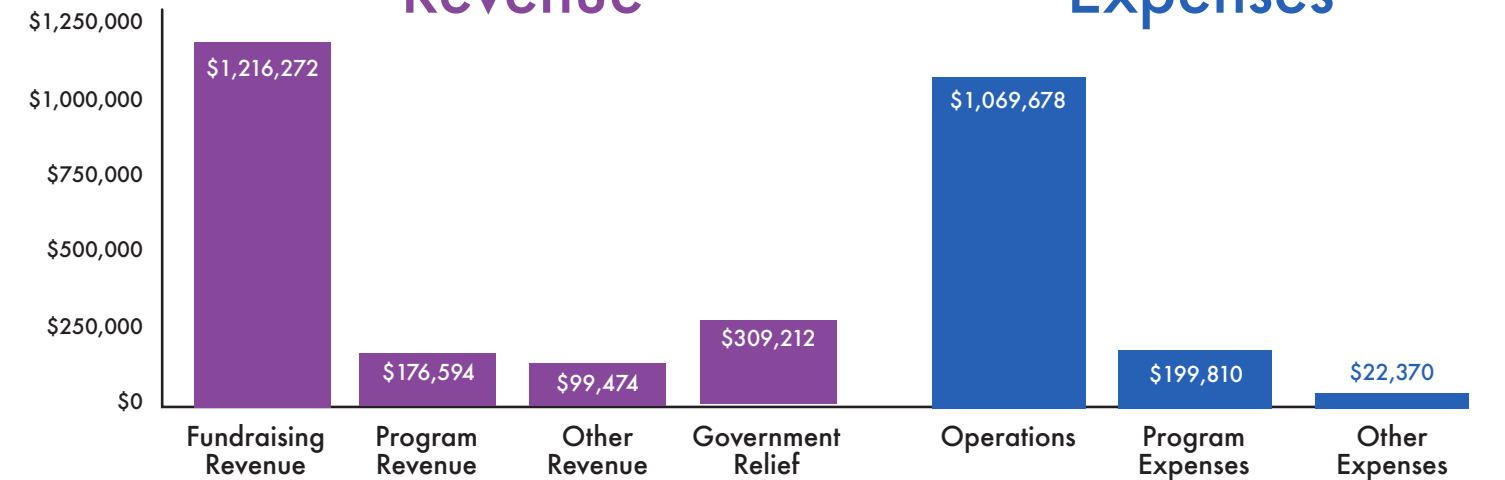
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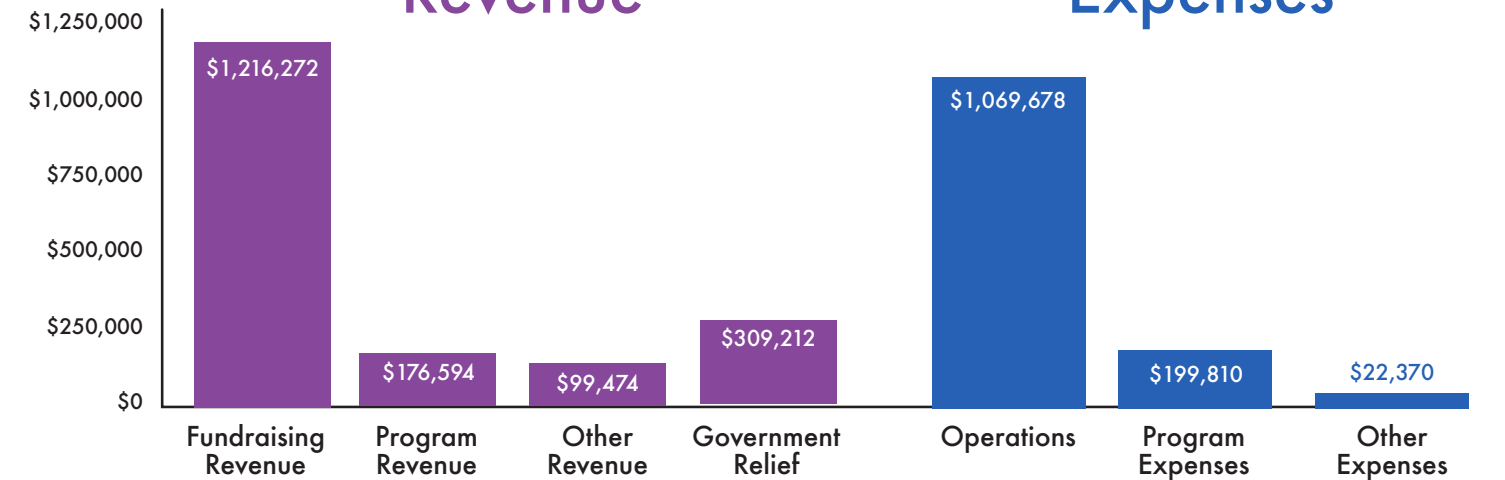
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2020-21
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2020-21
Expenses



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