

Silk Road Rising

CHICAGO, IL

THE STATS

OPERATIONAL SINCE 2012

EMPLOYEES: 5 FULL-TIME, 2 PART-TIME

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$503,000 IN 2015

NUMBER OF DATA PROFILES SUBMITTED: 8

What They Do

In response to 9/11, playwright and cross-cultural expert Jamil Houry and producer and businessman Malik Gillani founded Silk Road Rising. This Chicago-based theater company “tells stories through primarily Asian American and Middle Eastern American lenses, advancing a polycultural worldview.”



The Challenge

“Silk Road Rising did not have access to analytics,” said Founding Executive Director Malik Gillani. “Analysis requires the ability to compare and contrast data, but we only had our own internal information. Chicago has a great community of leaders and art makers who share ideas and information, but none of us had a tool that would allow us to access and compare historical or standardized data sets. In group meetings, I’d hear people say ‘we don’t spend a lot on our website’ or ‘we collect a lot of donations online.’ But, I wondered, what is ‘a lot’ or ‘a little?’”

How DataArts Helps

Silk Road Rising began using DataArts’s analytic reports to make the case for support internally to its board and externally to funders. Using DataArts’s data, Gillani was able to compare the level of return on his investment in online fundraising to that of other local organizations. This analysis confirmed that his organization’s strategy was paying off: Gillani determined that while his organizational spending on information technology activities was high versus his peers’, Silk Road’s return in online contributions was exponentially higher as well. The comparative data helped Gillani make evidence-based choices on how to allocate resources, and led Gillani to develop a new fundraising strategy to target individual donors on the web.



“We use the CDP to help us learn how we’re doing and to help us get to the sort of data we need to tell our story better.”

Malik Gillani
Founding Executive Director

How Data Makes a Difference

“I was able to apply for a capacity-building grant to help us expand our staff, since we don’t have anyone dedicated to raising funds from individuals. I used CDP’s data to learn that other organizations our size have, on average, 250 percent more individual donors. In terms of dollars, the gap was almost 600 percent! I integrated this information into my proposal, which successfully secured us with a seed investment to grow our individual giving program.”

DataArts, in a Word

“**Transparency.** In past grant reviews, a program officer would say, “Your expenses are much higher than other groups your size.” I never knew why. CDP’s transparency helps me compare Silk Road to other groups, determine how we are doing, and calculate the percentage difference. This capability positively impacts our decision-making. Today, I’m using CDP data to make the strongest case possible for funding and support.”

About DataArts

DataArts is a nonprofit organization that empowers the arts and cultural sector with high-quality data and resources in order to strengthen its vitality, performance, and public impact. The Cultural Data Profile (CDP) is DataArts’ flagship service, which thousands of cultural nonprofits use annually to report their financial and programmatic information. DataArts is a catalyst for data-informed decision-making that results in stronger management for arts and cultural organizations, better-informed philanthropy, and a rich information resource for advocates and researchers.

For more information, visit us at www.culturaldata.org.



Photos courtesy of Silk Road Rising, Chicago, IL
Photo credit: Silk Road Rising.