



NONPROFIT POWER

Engaging Voters for a More Inclusive Democracy



Introduction

This report is dedicated to the nonprofit leaders, staff, and volunteers committed to a more robust and equitable American electorate.

Voter turnout gaps along the lines of race, age, income, and education level distort our democracy at every level and the resulting policy debates. By bringing these missing voices to the table, nonprofits ensure a more inclusive society. They are particularly well-positioned to leverage their relationships with the communities they serve to not only repair the breaks in our political process, but also to deepen the trust these relationships are built on.

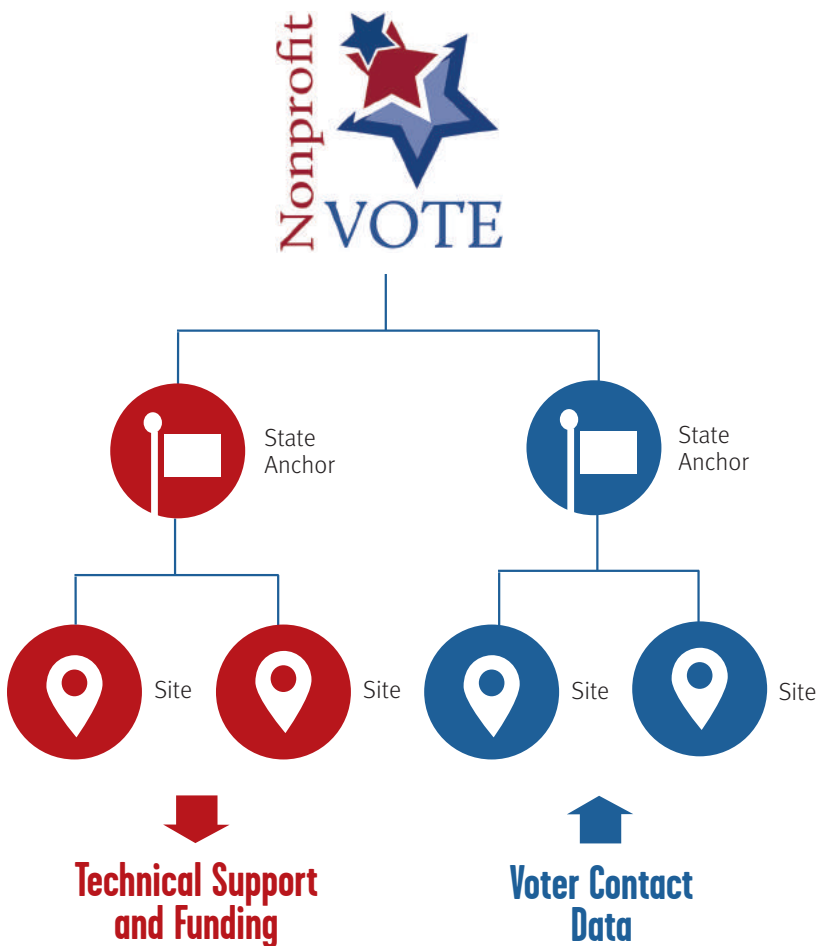
Amid a historic election year and a global health crisis, nonprofits once again demonstrated their civic power. As this report shows, they reliably reach groups often underrepresented at the polls. Furthermore, the nonpartisan voter engagement work our partner organizations conducted boosts turnout among these target groups.

The organizations we worked with in 2020 faced budgetary, staffing, and service delivery challenges throughout the pandemic, yet they still stepped up to make sure that the communities they serve are represented at the polls. We partnered with 180 organizations—mostly service providers, food pantries, housing groups, and other community-based nonprofits—to engage more than 70,000 voters. These groups illustrate the power of civically-engaged nonprofits to change the status quo, and, in doing so, should serve as a model for others.

70k
voters reached

Program Background

Nonprofit VOTE's multi-state field program partners with anchors across the nation who in turn active smaller, local sites to run nonpartisan voter engagement efforts in their communities, leveraging the community trust, long-term relations, and cultural competency these organizations bring to the table. Voters engaged in the program include anyone who registered to vote, signed a pledge-to-vote card, or completed an absentee ballot request form (or digital equivalent of one) at the participating sites. Contact information from these individuals was matched to their state's voter rolls via our data partner to assess demographics reached and turnout. Additionally, we conducted surveys, interviews, and focus groups to understand how these nonprofits made a difference.



Snapshot of Nonprofit Sites

180

nonprofit
organizations

22% were doing voter engagement for the first time

67% had annual budgets under \$1 million

77% reduced in-person services due to COVID-19

25% of sites only did digital voter engagement

Sites provided a variety of services including:

- Education (61%)
- Food Pantries (39%)
- Client Advocacy (34%)

Snapshot of Voters Engaged

Over **25,000** voter contacts were analyzed, including:

9,600 + registrations

13,600+ pledge-to-vote cards

1,360 + vote by mail applications

36% of these voters hadn't voted in the 2018 midterm or 2016 presidential election

Over **70,000** voters were reached

Visit nonprofitvote.org/nonprofitpower to find the full suite of resources and supplements, including methodology, in-depth case studies, practitioner findings, and shareable assets.

25k
voter contacts

Voters Engaged at Nonprofits

Voters engaged at nonprofits are more likely to be communities historically underrepresented in our democracy, including people of color, low-income earners, and young voters than registered voters in the same states.

Voters engaged by nonprofits were

2.4x

more likely to be voters of color



53%
Share of nonprofit voters



22%
Share of registered voters

Voters engaged by nonprofits were

2.1x

more likely to have less than \$30K in annual income



40%
Share of nonprofit voters

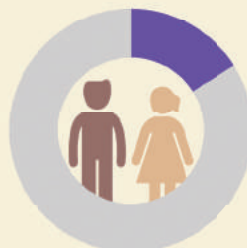


20%
Share of registered voters

Voters engaged by nonprofits were

1.6x

more likely to be 18-24 years old



16%
Share of nonprofit voters



10%
Share of registered voters

As public health guidelines shift, it's imperative that nonprofits renew in-person voter engagement work whenever possible to ensure the most marginalized are not left behind.

See next page for more.

Photo: A Better Chance A Better Community (ABC2)



In-Person vs. Online Strategies

Many nonprofits shifted to online strategies while others continued in-person activations with social distancing, PPE, and other COVID-safe measures. Comparing the reach of these two methods provides valuable lessons for the work of engaging voters.

Share of Low-income Voters Engaged by Method

Voters engaged in-person by nonprofits were

1.7x

more likely to have incomes less than \$30K compared to voters engaged digitally



In-person

51% low-income voters



Digital

30% low-income voters

Share of Voters of Color Engaged by Method

Voters engaged in-person by nonprofits were

1.4x

more likely to be voters of color compared to voters engaged digitally



In-person

60% voters of color



Digital

43% voters of color

Share of Young Voters Engaged by Method

Voters engaged digitally by nonprofits were

1.3x

more likely to be 18-24 year olds compared to voters engaged in-person



In-person

14% young voters



Digital

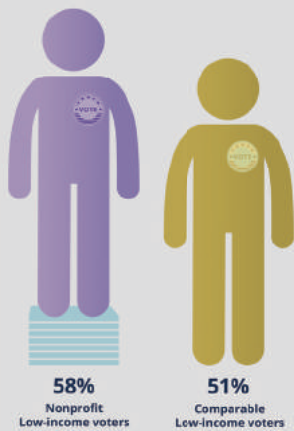
18% young voters

In-person engagement was more effective at reaching low-income and voters of color.

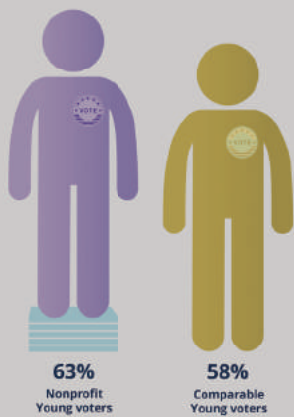
Voters who filled out paper registration forms, pledge-to-vote cards, and ballot request forms were engaged in-person. Voters who completed these forms digitally were primarily engaged online without face-to-face contact. A small portion of voters engaged digitally were done in-person through tablets. 50% of analyzed contacts came from paper forms vs. 44% from digital resources. 75% of surveyed sites conducted at least some in-person voter engagement.

Turnout Boost

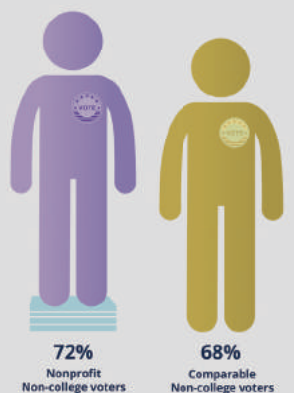
With election enthusiasm and interest at peak levels, people voted at rates not seen in over 100 years! This highly saturated environment meant that any one group's efforts would have a smaller relative impact than in other years. Nonetheless, the voters engaged by nonprofits showed a measurable turnout boost of 3 percentage points (p.p.) over comparable voters (75% vs. 72%).



Low-income voters engaged by nonprofits saw a **7 p.p.** boost in turnout over comparable low-income voters (under \$30K / year).

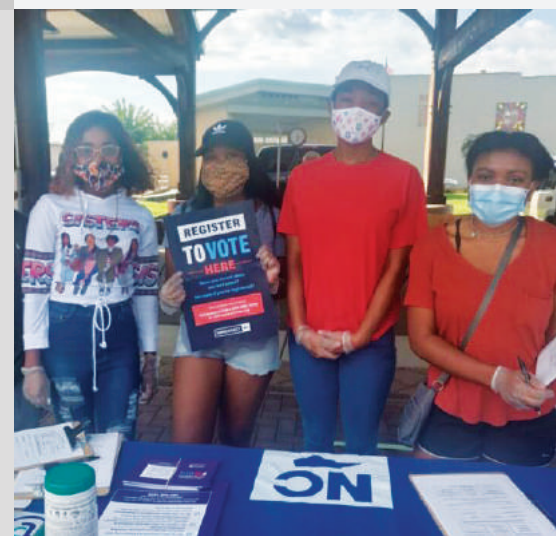


Young voters engaged by nonprofits saw a **5 p.p.** boost in turnout over comparable young voters (aged 18-24).



Non-college voters engaged by nonprofits saw a **4 p.p.** boost in turnout over comparable likely non-college voters.

From an equity standpoint, the turnout boost was higher among voters currently underrepresented at the polls, including low-income earners, people of color, and young voters.

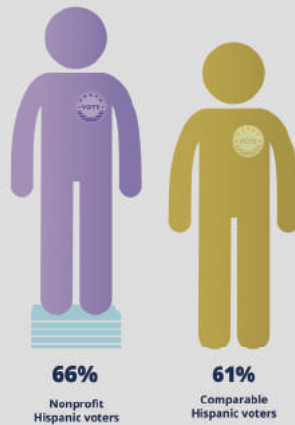


Turnout Boosts and Race

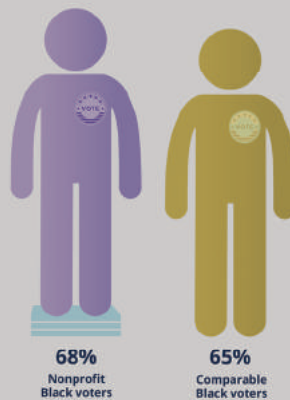
Voters of color saw a significantly higher turnout boosts than White voters, helping to narrow historic gaps in voting and foster a more representative electorate.

While White voters only had a turnout boost of 1 p.p., voters of color met or exceeded the overall turnout boost of 3 p.p. The biggest boosts were among Hispanic and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) voters, while Black voters saw a 3 p.p. turnout boost. Those least likely to vote otherwise benefit the most from being contacted. If your organization serves members of this community, your programming has the chance to really make their voices heard on a local and national level.

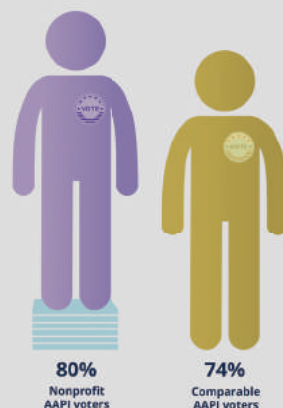
Comparable voters were matched by characteristics like age, race, sex, marital status, income, propensity, education, and county.



Hispanic voters engaged by nonprofits saw a **5 p.p.** boost in turnout over **comparable Hispanic voters.**

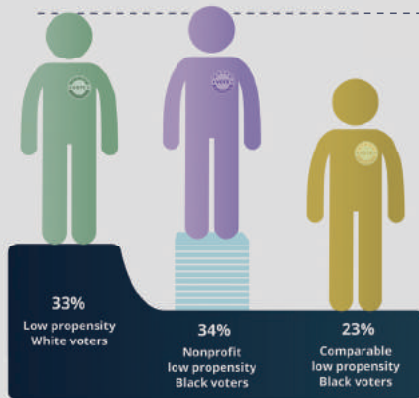


Black voters engaged by nonprofits saw a **3 p.p.** boost in turnout over **comparable Black voters.**



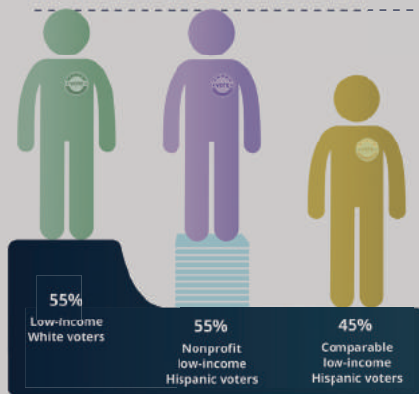
AAPI voters engaged by nonprofits saw a **6 p.p.** boost in turnout over **comparable AAPI voters.**

The turnout boost experienced by nonprofit engaged voters was often even higher when examining overlapping demographic groups, in some cases even closing the gaps.



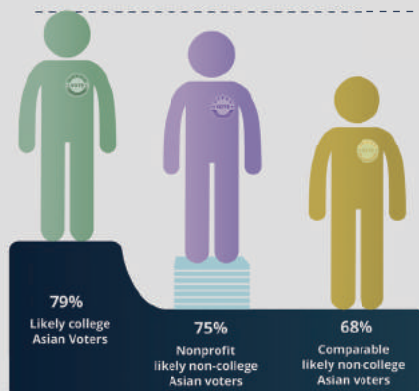
Low-propensity Black voters engaged by nonprofits were **11 p.p.** more likely to vote than comparable low-propensity Black voters (≤ 25 propensity score).

This closed the voting gap with the broader population of low-propensity registered White voters.



Low-income Hispanic voters engaged by nonprofits were **10 p.p.** more likely to vote than comparable low-income Hispanic voters (under \$30K / year).

This closed the voting gap with the broader population of low-income registered White voters.



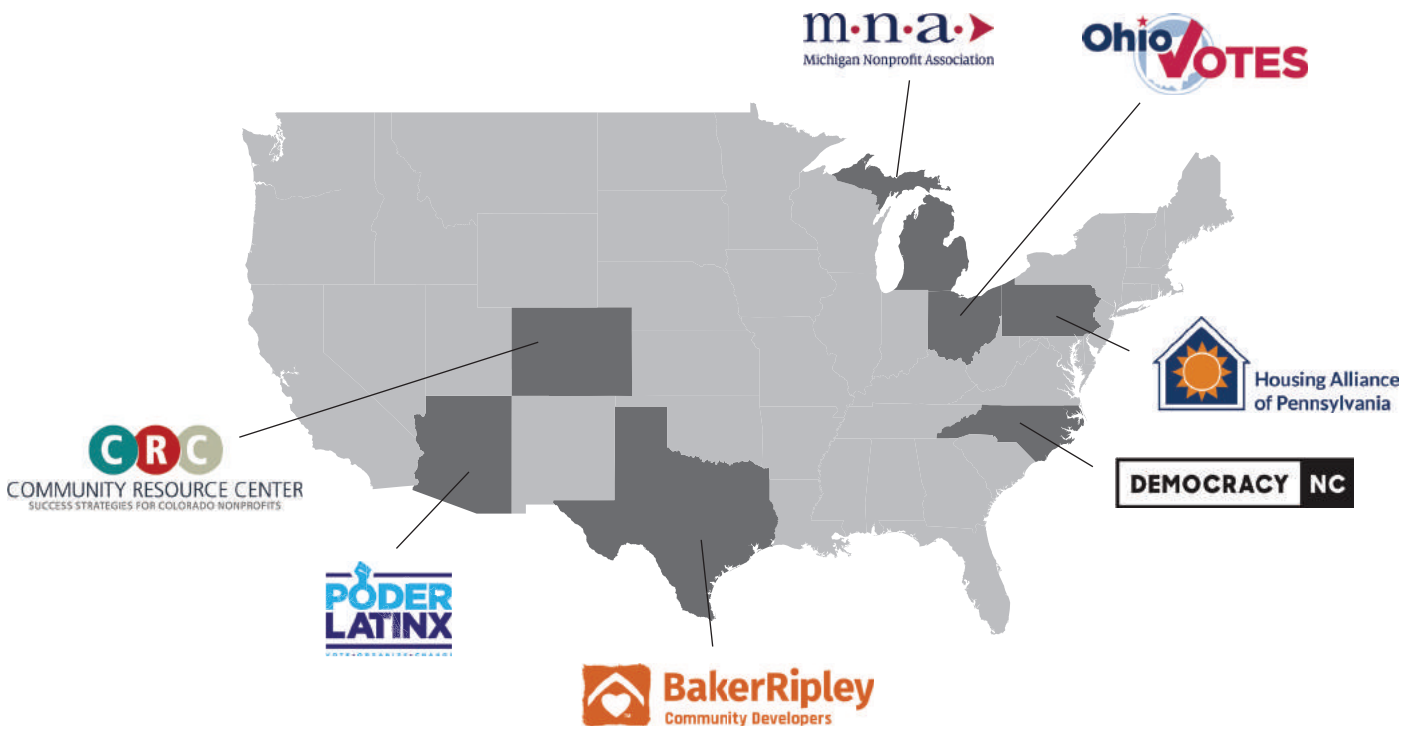
Likely non-college Asian voters engaged by nonprofits were **7 p.p.** more likely to vote than comparable non-college Asian voters.

This narrowed the voting gap with the broader population of likely college Asian voters.

Low Propensity Voters = High Potential Voters

Voter files used by campaigns include propensity scores of 0 to 100 as a predictor of an individual's likelihood of voting, with 100 being most likely. The scores are based on voting history and other factors. Campaigns typically only target voters with mid-to-high propensity scores because they are trying to win elections with limited resources. For nonprofits, voters with a low propensity score aren't non-voters—they are high potential voters who stand to benefit the most from being contacted.

Case Studies



Colorado: Over **5,227** voters reached



Turnout among the rural voters engaged was **86%**

Boys & Girls Clubs of the San Luis Valley



“Often we don’t have our voices heard by elected officials, so by saying we are registered voters gives us more sway and gets people more engaged in the advocacy and political process.”

Aubrey Hasvold, Advocacy Program Director, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless

Community Resource Center creates opportunities, tools, and strategies to develop nonprofits and community groups to strengthen Colorado. The Participation Project, founded in 2010 and adopted as a program by CRC in 2015, trains and manages a cohort of organizers that support on-site voter engagement work as needed. They work with each site—food pantries, community health clinics, homeless shelters, and others—to develop effective and realistic action plans for civic engagement.

29 Sites

The Action Center, The Ark Childcare & Preschool, Boys & Girls Clubs of the San Luis Valley, Boulder Food Rescue, The Center on Colfax, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, Denver Public Libraries, Emergency Family Assistance Association, Family Resource Center, Harm Reduction Action Center, History Colorado, Kaizen Food Rescue, Latino Community Foundation of Colorado, Manna - The Durango Soup Kitchen, Metro Caring, Mi Casa Resource Center, Mile High United Way - Bridging the Gap, Mountain Family Health Centers, North Fork Valley Public Radio, Peak Vista Community Health Centers, Saint Francis Center, Salud Family Health Centers, Salvation Army, School Community Youth Collaborative, Sister Carmen Community Center, Small Town Project, Sunrise Community Health Centers, Sun Valley Kitchen, and Warren Village.

North Carolina: Over **8,382** voters reached

DEMOCRACY NC

70%
of voters
these
nonprofits
engaged
were Black

Kinston Teens, Inc.

“People do want to vote once they understand the power of our vote and that they have a voice. But those barriers are there.”

Justice Served NC, Inc. on addressing barriers (like obtaining Voter ID and feeling like their vote doesn't matter) with the formerly incarcerated individuals they serve.

For over 25 years, Democracy North Carolina has used research, organizing, and advocacy to increase voter participation. Their mission is to strengthen democratic structures, build power among disenfranchised communities, and inspire confidence in a transformed political process that works for all. Their focus on community-based leadership is reflected in their training approach and choice of sites for nonprofit voter engagement work.

38 Sites

A Better Chance A Better Community, New Day Outreach Center, Bertie County NAACP, Blazing Beauties, Brick Capital CDC, Charlotte NCNW, Churches Outreach Network Interfaith Clergy, CORAS, Cumberland Health Net, Delta Sigma Theta Enfield-Roanoke Rapids, El Vinculo Hispano / The Hispanic Liaison, Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina, Gladys Rogers Darensburg Foundation, HOLLA CDC, Interfaith Clergy, Justice Served NC, Inc., Kinston Teens, Inc., MANNA Foodbank, Meals on Wheels Wake County, Ministers Conference of Winston Salem & Vicinity, NC 100, NC C.I.V.I.L, New Creation Apostolic Worship Tabernacle, Parkway United Church of Christ, Pisgah Legal Services, Project Cover, Raleigh-Apex NAACP, Raleigh Foodbank, Rural Health Group, Saint James Presbyterian Church, Scotland Neck Community Task Force Team, Second Harvest, Spirit and Truth UM Church, Sunshine Station, Inc., The Tipping Point, United Health Centers, WNCAP, and YWCA of Asheville.



Ohio: Over **19,186** voters reached



Engaged
the most
low
propensity
voters out
of all 2021
anchors

Greater Collinwood Development
Corporation

“Who could better gain the trust of the community other than those who come from the same community since Smart Development is also composed of refugee, immigrant, and Arab-identifying individuals?”

Melaak Rashid, Director of Development, Smart Development, Inc.

As a statewide coalition of hundreds of housing organizations and homeless service providers, COHHIO promotes a range of housing assistance services, public policy advocacy, and provides training and technical assistance. Ohio VOTES is COHHIO's year-round, statewide, nonpartisan initiative to build civic engagement in Ohio's low-income communities. Ohio VOTES works with housing providers, health centers, community centers, food pantries, homeless programs, and other nonprofits.

47 Sites

Access Center for Independent Living, Akron Votes, AxessPointe Community Health Centers, Bexley Library, Church 4 All People, Care Alliance Health Clinic, Cleveland Votes, Community Action Against Addiction, Dayton Food Pantry, Dayton Metro Library, Dayton Peace Museum, DCR, The Devil Strip, Dorothy Day House, Downtown Cleveland Alliance, Eta Tau Lambda Alpha Phi Alpha, First Grace United Church of Christ, First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati, Food Bank Mobile, Greater Cleveland Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Greater Collinwood Development Corporation, Hardesty Park, Horvitz YouthAbility of JFSA Cleveland, Hosack Baptist Church, House of the Lords, King Ave UMC, League of Women Voters of Akron, Greater Cleveland, Columbus, Greater Dayton, Greater Youngstown, LifeCare Alliance, Mahoning Youngstown, Montgomery County Job Center, NEOCH, NSI Food Pantry, NOVA, OCCHA, OSU Hospital, Reeb Center - Southside Thrive, River Valley Organizing Project, Sigma Kappa - University of Dayton, Smart Development, St Paul United Methodist Church, Summit Lake Community Center, Trinity Baptist Church, Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership, YMCA Shelter, and Young Latino Network.



Pennsylvania: Over **4,673** voters reached



Highest proportion of sites with a primary mission of physical and/or mental health services and advocacy

Rankin/Mon Valley/Pittsburgh Section of the National Council of the Negro Women



“We always look for opportunities to center our community and make the voices of the LGBTQ people in our region heard.”

Katie Suppes, Director of Programs, Research, & Evaluation, Bradbury Sullivan LGBT Community Center on the importance of engaging clients receiving services as voters.

The Housing Alliance is a statewide coalition working to provide leadership and a common voice for policies, practices, and resources to ensure that all Pennsylvanians, especially those with low incomes, have access to safe, decent, and affordable homes. As a new anchor organization, the Alliance was able to boost advocacy efforts and engage many of their members in voter engagement for the first time through their PA Votes campaign.

19 Sites

Abilities in Motion, Alleghenies United Cerebral Palsy, Allentown Housing Authority, Anthracite Region Center for Independent Living (ARCIL), Arab-American Development Corp, Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center, Center for Independent Living of South Central PA, HACE CDC, Hunger Free PA - PA Food Banks, League of Women Voters Erie County Chapter, League of Women Voters of Philadelphia, Mental Health Association of NWPA, PHAN, Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network, Rankin/Mon Valley/Pittsburgh Section of the National Council of Negro Women, Self Advocates United as 1, Third Street Alliance, Uptown Partners, and Voices for Independence

Michigan: Over **22,180** voters reached



81%
of voters
engaged
were
unlikely to
have had
a college
education

Chaldean Community Foundation

“The community was pleasantly surprised that our organization was engaging in voter registration work and was delighted to have the opportunity to sign up alongside some of our other great initiatives.”

Amanda Ciofu, Grants & Evaluation Manager,
YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids

The Michigan Nonprofit Association is a statewide membership organization that achieves its mission through advocacy, training, technology services, and civic engagement. The goal of their community engagement programs is to enhance participation in the “civic engagement cycle” of historically underrepresented groups. Efforts include getting constituents counted in the Census, to vote, and to participate in the redistricting process. Every site that responded to the follow-up survey indicated they would partner with MNA to do voter engagement in the future.

16 Sites

211, ABISA, ACCESS, African Bureau of Immigration and Social Affairs, APIA Vote Michigan, Arab and Chaldean Council, Busy Bee Here to Help, Capital Area United Way, Chaldean Community Foundation, Delta Sigma Theta, Detroit Branch NAACP, Links - Great Lakes Chapter, LWV Grand Rapids, United Way of Southwest Michigan, University of Michigan – Dearborn, and YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids



Texas: Over **5,528** voters reached



Engaged
the most 18
to 24 year-
old voters
1,100+

“Voter engagement benefits BakerRipley by affording us another opportunity to grow our base and to continue raising awareness in the community about our organization and programs. By helping to increase voter participation, we, in turn, help the community empower itself.”

Bolivar “Bo” Fraga, Sr. Community Engagement Developer at BakerRipley



For over 100 years, BakerRipley has transformed communities in Houston, TX by connecting low-income families and individuals to opportunities so they can achieve the lives they’ve imagined. For years, they have found new and creative ways to get out the vote among the communities they serve. 2020 was no different; they focused their efforts on phone banking and food distribution to meet the human and voter engagement needs of Houstonians during the pandemic.

Arizona: Over **5,000** voters reached



Highest proportion of Hispanic voters engaged

“Through our food bank operations and follow-up outreach, we have reached more than 5,000 voters and engaged more than 60 volunteers. At our food bank, we ID participants on specific issue areas, and we do follow-ups through texts and calls.”

Yadira Sanchez, Co-Executive Director



Poder Latinx is a civic and social justice organization taking on an innovative approach to comprehensive civic engagement, breaking down Latinx cultural and generational identities to better conduct engagement. By March 2020, they had laid a foundation in Arizona for an ambitious event and canvassing-based, voter outreach program called Votar es Poder, but the pandemic forced them to pivot to remote work and phone banking. Recognizing their communities needed extra assistance, they launched a weekly food bank, which provided another opportunity to engage voters and help them register.

Conclusion

Nonprofits of all missions and sizes, from volunteer-run food pantries to multi-service organizations serving thousands annually, have the power to disrupt historical voting inequities that persist in our communities. These organizations have the trust and access needed to reach voters who are often overlooked by campaigns, and who face many other barriers to participation.

Engaging the people we serve does more than boost voter turnout—it impacts the culture and capacity of our organizations.

Nonprofits that did voter engagement work reported benefits such as better community relationships and building skills among their staff; 96% of participating organizations expressed interest in conducting voter engagement activities in the future.

Nonprofit VOTE is dedicated to uncovering best practices and expanding the number of nonprofits that engage voters. This simple intervention will lead to better outcomes for our clients, our organizations, and our country.

Visit nonprofitvote.org/nonprofit-power to find shareable graphics, practitioner findings, methodology, and the full Nonprofit VOTE resource library.

Acknowledgements / Credits

Released August 2021 by
Nonprofit VOTE

Research: Caroline Mak,
Brian Miller, and Caitlin Donnelly

Writing: Caitlin Donnelly,
Brian Miller, and Caroline Mak

Graphics: Kimberley Carroll-Cox
and Caroline Mak

Layout: James Hill,
Kimberley Carroll-Cox, Bob Calmer

Special thanks to
Ariel Shvartsman, Alec Bernstein
and Heather Rodgers at
Catalist, and Chris Curran.



About Nonprofit VOTE

We help nonprofits engage the people they serve in voting and elections. We are the leading source of nonpartisan resources to help nonprofits integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services.

Nonprofit VOTE can provide your organization with the technical assistance and training your staff and affiliates need. We also work with membership-based organizations, coalitions, and foundations to build civic engagement programs to engage their respective networks.

NONPROFIT POWER

Engaging Voters for a More Inclusive Democracy



Learn more about the benefits of voter engagement, sign up for our newsletter, and download free resources at nonprofitvote.org.

To make a tax-deductible donation, visit our website or email us at info@nonprofitvote.org

- Facebook: @NpVote
- Twitter: @NpVote
- Instagram: @NonprofitVote