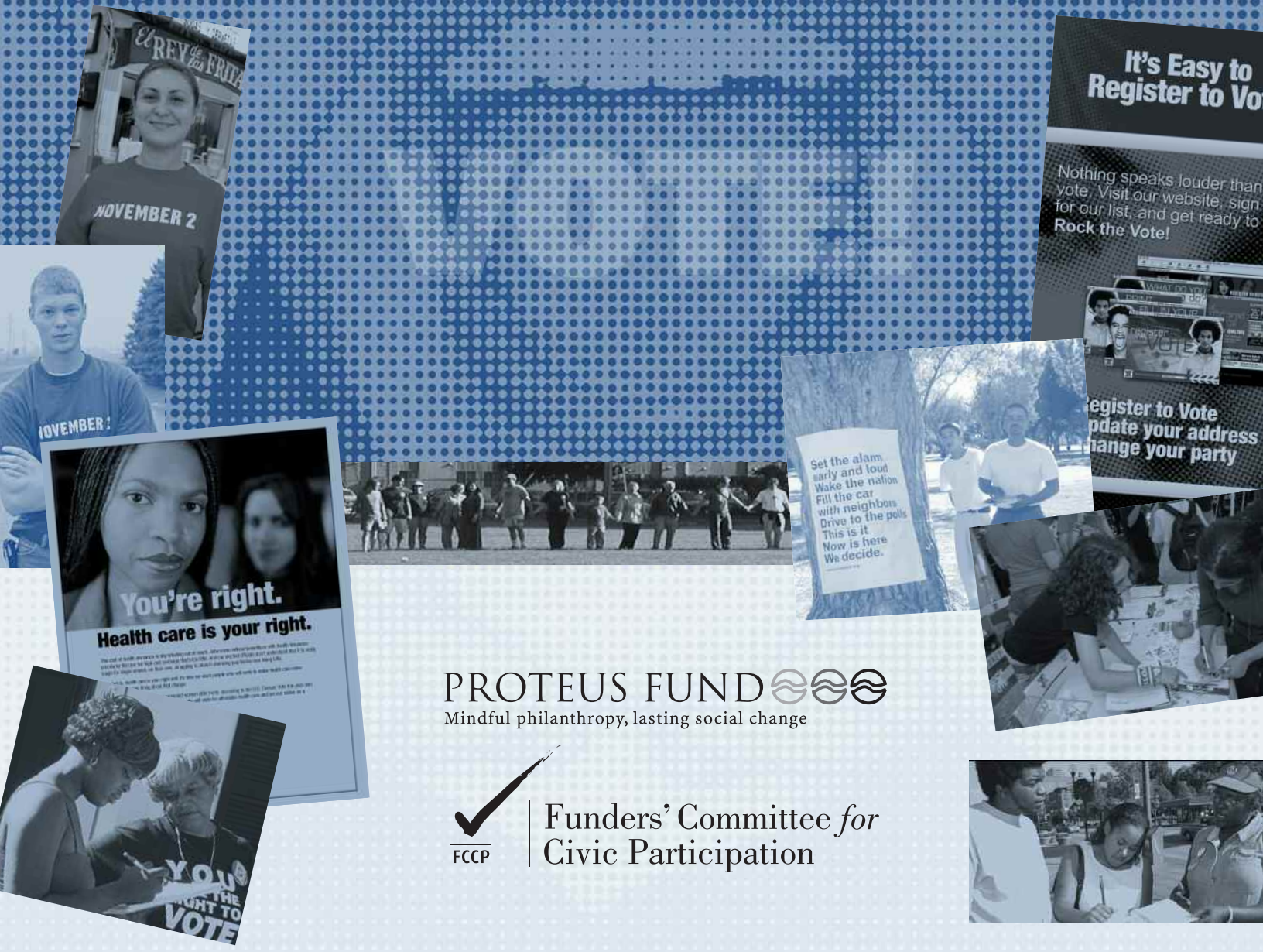Funders' Committee for Civic Participation
and Proteus Fund report *on the*

Voter Engagement
Evaluation Project

PROTEUS FUND
Mindful philanthropy, lasting social change

Funders' Committee *for*
Civic Participation

Voter Engagement Evaluation Project (VEEP)

Acknowledgements

At the same time, there are different IRS restrictions that apply to private, public, and community foundations in how they can support this work. Therefore we suggest that funders consult with lawyers who are experienced in nonprofit/foundation law before undertaking a voter engagement grant program. For a good overview on issues that affect voter engagement grantmaking, we also recommend that funders consult a recently updated legal guide, commonly known as the "orange booklet." This easy-to-understand guide, *Voter Registration, Education & Ballot Campaigns: A Funders' Guide to Legal Issues,* can be obtained through the Funders' Committee. In addition, a wide range of legal resources is available for funders and nonprofits from the Alliance for Justice (www.allianceforjustice.org) and the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest (www.clpi.org).

As the 2008 presidential election cycle begins with the quadrennial trips to New Hampshire and Iowa by those intrepid souls beginning to seek their party's nomination, we offer this report in the hope that funders and nonprofits will realize the importance of getting involved in civic/voter engagement opportunities. We believe this report is helpful in a variety of civic endeavors—from school board elections, to political accountability sessions with elected leaders, to promoting civic education among youth and adults, to encouraging public engagement in major policy debates, and the wide range of activities that go on in neighborhoods each and every day. Civic engagement should be not just an every four years affair, but an ongoing and constant effort to ensure that our democracy is vital, effective, and accountable.

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Co-Chair, Funders' Committee for Civic Participation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The breadth and intensity of §501(c)(3) voter engagement activity in the 2004 election cycle was enormous. Approximately 3 million new voters were registered in underrepresented communities by a handful of national organizations and by hundreds of community-based, faith-based and service provision organizations. Overall, voter turnout was the highest since 1968. Voting rates in all underrepresented demographic groups tracked by the U.S. Census Bureau[*] were up from 2000. Moreover, a significant increase in funder support for nonpartisan voter engagement work was evident, with hundreds of funders contributing to the field, learning from one another, and coordinating their grant-making.

Nonetheless, following the election, a rapid and dramatic decline in funding occurred. The lack of planning to capture assets built from this intensive effort meant that many organizations abandoned their voter engagement activities. Some groups shut down. The resulting gaps could hinder the ability to generate and sustain the level of grassroots election-year energy and enthusiasm witnessed in 2004 for future election cycles.

To address the quadrennial feast and famine problem of funding voter engagement activities, funders should recognize that voter engagement comprises four elements: voter registration, voter education, voter protection,[**] and voter mobilization or get-out-the-vote (GOTV).[***] Moreover, long-term planning and funding for these activities are the joint responsibility of both the nonprofit practitioners and funders.

Lessons captured through the Voter Engagement Evaluation Project (VEEP) illustrate what worked most effectively and make it clear that planning and funding for effective voter engagement programs should start earlier, be ongoing, and integrated into permanent policy or issue-based work.

Funding that is received early enough in an election cycle, divided appropriately among the different elements of voter engagement work, and maintained at a sustainable level during off-years, allows organizations to retain key staff from cycle to cycle, decreases the need for retraining, and gives groups time to create detailed work plans for integrating voter engagement activities into their permanent §501(c)(3) work.

The VEEP research summarized in this report presents three promising approaches for driving effective nonpartisan voter engagement field work:

Integrating nonpartisan electoral work with constituency and/or issue organizing

Community-based organizations (operating independently, through networks, or as affiliates of national organizations) need the resources to plan and to incorporate nonpartisan electoral organizing as an ongoing part of their issue-based or constituency-based organizing. Community residents who are contacted by a trusted entity, and who are engaged regularly and across election cycles, will therefore better understand the connection between the election of their representatives and the policies that affect their lives.

Effective use of voter files[****] to enhance field operations

National, state, and local organizations need to know how to use voter files effectively to carry out voter engagement operations. Organizations need accurate and updated state/county-based lists of registered voters to conduct election-related activities. These activities range from tracking voter education and mobilization contacts to working with local elections officials to ensure that adequate language and polling resources are available. Organization contacts become more effective as organizations obtain the hardware, software, and training needed to match their own member or constituent lists against the voter file and other relevant data about each constituent.

Increased coordination of voter engagement activity

The degree to which critical resources (e.g., mass communications, ongoing technical assistance, legal guidance) are created centrally and made accessible to interested organizations depends upon coordination among organizations at the local, state and national levels. Increased

coordination among funders and field practioners will also help to mitigate duplication and wasted resources at one end, and maximize the use of enhanced information to improve the effectiveness of voter engagement operations at the other end.

This report also describes three areas of intervention for strengthening nonpartisan voter engagement programs, though these were evaluated to a lesser extent as part of this project:

- *Efforts to remove structural barriers to participation for all voters*
- *Effective communications strategies*
- *Promising technological innovations*

Recommendations for Funders

Emerging from these analysis are a series of recommendations for funders. The report presents particular action items and funding opportunities to advance these broad recommendations:

1 **To increase the effectiveness of voter engagement work:**

- **Support the development of priority field resources and capacities**
- **Support national, state, and local coordinating "tables" or other ongoing opportunities for coordination and collaboration**
- **Streamline grants processes and decisionmaking**
- **Share information and avoid duplication**
- **Collaborate with grassroots organizations and organizers to advance effective ways of planning, conducting, and measuring voter engagement work**

2 **To increase the overall level of support for voter engagement work:**

- **Educate issue-based funder colleagues about the importance of supporting their grantees to incorporate voter engagement as a component of their ongoing work**
- **Deepen the commitment of existing civic participation funders to support off-year infrastructure development, planning and other work that advances effective election-year efforts**
- **Expand the pool of donors who support voter registration, education, protection, and mobilization**

Funders increasingly value the kind of collaboration and high-level information sharing, coordinated grantmaking, and evalution that took place in 2004. This report can serve as a resource for advancing collaboration among existing funders, reaching out to additional issue and constituency funder colleagues, and advancing new research that will inform effective grantmaking in this field.

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*   African-American, Asian and Pacific Islander American, Latino/a, unmarried women, and youth (age 18-24).

**   VEEP's definition of "voter protection" is all (pre-Election Day and Election Day) activities that ensure a voter's equal access to the franchise and that his/her vote is counted (e.g., removing structural barriers to registration and voting and litigating where necessary, advocating for improved election administration practices, educating voters, and fighting unintentional and intentional intimidation/ suppression).

***   Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) is an intensive campaign aimed at mobilizing registered voters during the weeks prior to and on Election Day. Some organizations also mobilized voters to vote early or absentee, or, in states with same-day registration, mobilized unregistered but eligible voters on Election Day.

****   A "Voter File" is a database file that is updated by the state or county elections division in each state and includes such information as the history of the voter's participation in prior elections.

INTRODUCTION

C ivic participation funders produced this report through a collaborative process to evaluate and reflect upon the §501(c)(3) activity that took place during the 2004 election cycle.

The research was designed to:

- **Assess the effectiveness of nonpartisan strategies undertaken in the 2004 election cycle to increase voter engagement**

- **Derive lessons that inform funders and advance effective voter engagement grantmaking in the future**

The researchers solicited and analyzed input from a diverse array of practitioners, funders and academics. They studied independent assessments of national and state-based nonprofit operations; held focus group discussions with local organizations; interviewed prominent field leaders and funders; and empirically derived findings where feasible. (A list of VEEP research papers and authors is included in Appendix B.)

The commissioned studies examined:

- **The allocation of nonpartisan voter engagement funding**

- **Efforts to register and mobilize underrepresented citizens**

- **Activities to build or strengthen the civic participation infrastructure among organizations that work with underrepresented constituencies**

- **Efforts to enhance coordination and collaboration among organizations undertaking nonpartisan voter engagement work**

In June 2005, Proteus Fund and Funders' Committee for Civic Participation (FCCP) gathered funder colleagues and nonprofit leaders for two days of learning and analysis based on findings from these studies. This report synthesizes the commissioned research and the convening discussions and recommendations. The "Top Ten Lessons" highlights areas of consensus that emerged through this process. The body of the report then explains the background and findings from which these lessons surfaced, describes some priority areas for follow-up work, and notes initial steps taken by FCCP and some individual funders. The findings presented here allow funders and nonprofit practitioners to avoid repeating mistakes, refine and replicate effective strategies, and target priority areas for additional experimentation and investment in future election years.

Top Ten Lessons for Funders

Funders supported an enormous level of §501(c)(3) voter engagement activity in 2004. They encouraged innovation and experimentation, promoted greater accountability, and advanced strategic planning and collaboration as never before. Consequently, §501(c)(3) voter engagement programs expanded significantly. There is a great deal to learn from and build on for additional impact in the future. The following "Top Ten" list was presented at the June 2005 convening, to prompt discussion and provide initial guidance to funders regarding ongoing support for nonpartisan voter engagement work.

Top ten §501 (c)(3) voter engagement lessons from 2004[1]:

1. Effective voter contact is up close and personal
2. Build it (strategically) and they will come
3. Voter engagement is part of a permanent campaign
4. Ready, set, plan
5. Voter files are the fuel that drives voter contact
6. Voter protection must be front loaded
7. Repeat the message, then repeat the message
8. Collaboration demands more than good will
9. "Tech"ing it to the streets
10. A ruler is an important but limited measuring stick

1. Effective voter contact is up close and personal

Empirical studies demonstrate that in-person contacts are the most effective motivational message delivery system.[2] This was particularly true if the contact was delivered by a trusted peer—ideally a person in some sort of extended relationship through an organization or as a neighbor—paid or volunteer. This conviction drove the direct voter contact approach that prevailed during the 2004 election cycle.

This method of contact is resource-intensive and requires expanded organizational capacity. More experienced organizers and skilled supervisors are needed on the ground to manage effective operations and in additional locations. Successful efforts undertaken during the election should be expanded into other areas of civic engagement. This is particularly true in communities of color. Permanent staff and volunteers who are familiar with these communities should lead the way. Moreover, as a community that seeks to empower the underrepresented, funders should have a commitment to build strategically leadership that reflects these communities.

2. Build it (strategically) and they will come

A voter engagement strategy that integrates voter registration, voter education, voter protection and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) activities is more likely to increase turnout on Election Day and to generate citizens who stay engaged in civic life beyond the voting booth. The priority focus and funding for nonprofit groups doing voter engagement work was voter registration first and mobilization second.[3] Many of these efforts did little voter education to connect voting to the ongoing agendas of individual organizations and to the issues that their constituents care about[4]; and voter protection activities were rarely incorporated into voter engagement programs in a timely way *(see lesson 6 below)*.

Building a voter engagement program well requires tailoring to geographic, demographic and cultural circumstances.[5] For example, reaching residents of Indian reservations where there are few street addresses, or working with congregations where door-to-door contact may be difficult, often present significant challenges.[6] In response, organizations experimented with unconventional methods and approaches. In order to reach young people who are better defined by "how they live"[7] than "where they live," voter registration drives were conducted at street festivals, bars, coffee shops, bowling alleys, laundromats, and even in taxicabs.

While one approach does not necessarily work for all constituencies, best practices have emerged.[8] For example, as groups experimented with combinations of paid and volunteer staff operations, many found that volunteer-based programs took significantly longer to build and that volunteer-driven voter registration is less disciplined and presents greater challenges to meeting steady production goals than working with paid canvassers. Yet, through a number of community-based[9] organizations, particularly in states where highly competitive elections were taking place and where constituents were saturated with contacts from candidates and political parties, volunteers succeeded in engaging constituents more effectively than paid canvassers.[10] Groups agreed that the most effective model combines the best aspects of volunteer canvassers—including the potential to build a committed base of skilled volunteers that will remain active—with paid staff coordinating volunteer canvass teams.

3 Voter engagement is part of a permanent campaign

Voter engagement is an important tool for advancing continuing civic engagement. Issue and constituency groups that integrate voter engagement activities into their ongoing organizing work gain value by advancing both broader civic participation and narrower organizational agendas. All functions of an organization, such as communications, fundraising and outreach, can be incorporated into a voter engagement plan for maximum impact.

Education about issues can encourage people to vote. Many issue organizations report that they engaged in non-partisan voter work because elected officials are more responsive to constituencies that vote, enabling these constituencies to move public policy and increase the accountability of government and elected leaders on issues that they prioritize. Voters, particularly those from disenfranchised communities, need to see that voting translates into

collective power and impact. Relationships established with new and infrequent voters should be nurtured, and follow-up contact should connect voter engagement, policy/issues and community priorities. This should be a seamless flow, minimizing the current boom/bust cycle of election contacts.

4 Ready, set, plan

Early planning and capacity building enable organizations to effectively work at scale during election years. Ideally, groups should receive funding early in the cycle for strategic planning that incorporates goals and timetables for training, support and execution, enabling them to maximize the additional resources that become available during an election year.

Receiving funding later in the cycle or being uncertain about when funding would arrive made it more difficult for groups to use available resources strategically. Quite a few organizations had difficulty finding experienced mid-level leadership to run field programs. Many groups also felt vulnerable to attack or limited their scope of work due to insufficient knowledge and skills related to legal and communications issues. Many organizations experienced steep learning curves and high organizer turnover in addition to increased and unanticipated management, accounting and technological challenges. Rapid organizational growth strained systems and caused overlap, ultimately making evaluation more difficult. Even well funded organizations sometimes held back resources in fear that funding would not be available readily after the election. This can have a negative impact on the outcome of voter engagement work at the critical final moments before an election.

To be effective, community-based organizations must invest early in volunteer, staff and leadership training and technical assistance. They also need to strengthen their operations with electoral tools such as voter databases.[11] Priority technical assistance and training needs include strategic communications, technology and database management. Legal training is vital as well for appropriate §501(c)(3) demographic targeting, messaging and information sharing. Trainings and trial runs using local and state elections represent vital opportunities for practitioners to interact with peer organizations and develop the trust that underpins organizational collaboration (see lesson 8 below). For foundations that invest in training and ongoing technical assistance, these are gifts that keep on giving.[12]

5   **Voter files are the fuel that drives voter contact**

A voter file is a database file that is updated by the state or county elections division in each state and includes information such as the history of a voter's participation in prior elections. Using voter files and enhanced databases[13] can increase substantially the effectiveness of voter engagement work. Data about past levels of turnout, percentages and numbers of minority residents, income levels, information about interest in a variety of issues, and past organizational activity can help groups focus their §501(c)(3) voter education, registration, protection and mobilization efforts.

Beyond turning members into voters during an election, databases can help build an organization's long-term capacity by turning voters into advocates on issues following elections. Voter lists enable groups to gather and retain personal information, conduct identification for issue advocacy, focus communications on specific voters and track these communications. They also enable groups to establish and define quantifiable goals and to track accomplishments over time. Enhancing lists constitutes a particularly worthwhile investment, since it uses §501(c)(3) capacity-building resources to provide change-of-address and new phone information that allow organizations to keep in touch with the 20% of their membership who might move in any given year, and yields precious potential donor information. Indeed, several organizations using enhanced lists have created a seamless continuity between nonpartisan GOTV work and donor cultivation using voting history information as an indicator of likely donors to an organization.

In the 2004 election, groups had difficulties obtaining and managing data. Many groups did not have timely access to accurate data lists, could not regularly match lists to voter files, or had incompatible database structures. These obstacles severely impaired their voter engagement operations and limited the possibility of sharing information among organizations. Resources and time were squandered because multiple organizations purchased the same voter files and sometimes procured inappropriate software. Efforts are needed to identify the best sources of accurate voter files early in the election season and to rationalize their purchase and distribution (i.e., facilitating cost sharing, platform compatibility/uniformity and collaboration). Yet, resolving these centralized, data-sharing questions is not adequate. Many groups are new to this work and lack requisite technology and sophistication. Voter lists become dated rapidly and are of little use unless organizations maintain them. It is also important to audit the voter file

information that participants will need early in the process, so that it is appropriate and meets the needs of different organizations. The process of integrating voter file management into ongoing organizational work has proven to be even more of a challenge for most organizations. Training and technical assistance are thus an essential part of the investment.

6   **Voter protection must be front loaded**

Despite significant progress, 36% of those eligible to vote still did not do so in November 2004. Citizens from underrepresented groups are subjected disproportionately to barriers to voting, bureaucratic neglect, understaffing and inadequate redress of voter suppression. Many underrepresented constituencies are still underrepresented at best, and marginalized or disenfranchised at worst. And too many communities are written off because of low voter performance.

In 2004, field leaders paid more particular attention to voter protection[14] in historically underrepresented communities. However, the focus of these efforts was on poll watching and troubleshooting for voters on Election Day. To increase the effectiveness of voter protection efforts, attention to election administration should be an important element of year-round voter engagement programs. Legislative and governance decisions that are made and actions that are taken well before elections and during off-years have an impact on whether a person is able to vote on Election Day and whether that vote is counted. Such decisions include the disposition of provisional ballots, governance decisions regarding voting equipment and purge lists, and county budgets that determine the allocation of elections staff and other resources.

Effective voter registration programs require timely processes to verify that voters made it onto the rolls and to allow for correction of incomplete or inaccurate applications. In addition, building voter protection objectives into the design of databases will enable organizations to capture pertinent information and redress delays in registration processing. Organizations should seek to develop and maintain relationships with officials who manage voter files and make decisions regarding polling stations, hours, language, transportation and disability access.[15] During the election cycle crunch in 2004, local elections staff in some places refused to meet with newcomers. They were more likely to alert local advocates with whom they had a relationship about potential problems such as funding, staffing and polling place shortages.

As a result of trust and good working relationships, some election officials permitted volunteers to help contact applicants with incomplete applications, allowed voters to provide missing information until the evening of Election Day, and helped local election workers advocate for more funding from city officials.

7 Repeat the message, then repeat the message

Very little research has been conducted to measure the impact of §501(c)(3) messages. There is general consensus in the field and among pollsters that messages should be developed for particular groups of people based on issues they care about.[16] For example, one major effort targeted young people who focus groups uncovered were "on the verge" of engagement due to their cynicism about the benefits of voting and/or government. The message developed to reach this group was "Make them pay attention to us," emphasizing that the issues they care about were overlooked because not enough of them voted.[17]

Efforts aimed at unmarried women used pre-tested messages[18] focused largely on empowerment. The primary messages were: 1) 22 million women didn't vote in 2000; if we all get together and vote in 2004, we can be agents of change; 2) messages that enhanced the connection with economic security concerns such as health care, pay equity and retirement security; and 3) messages that countered the perception that the logistics of registering and voting are difficult. Organizations that targeted this constituency group found this background research helpful; many stuck to one or more of the tested messages while others used the research to inform them about which messages to avoid.[19]

Message repetition, linking and combination of messages have a meaningful and motivational impact. A delivery system that reinforces this intentional web of messages through multiple media, known as convergence,[20] was found to create a narrative in the minds of recipients that led to greater fluency with issues and an eagerness to participate.[21]

8 Collaboration demands more than good will

Unprecedented coordination, networking, and mentoring took place during the 2004 election cycle. To varying degrees, this cooperation facilitated common access to voter files and coordination of voter protection work, training and even fundraising. Some groups noted that increased coordination among funders helped the grantees work more collaboratively.

In some states, coordinating "tables" enabled organizations to complement one another's functional strengths and compensate for their weaknesses. For example, groups could use one organization's access to public spaces for site-based work, another organization's staff or volunteer base to run events, and yet another organization's physical infrastructure. In some states, ballot initiatives provided a venue for groups to work together on a common issue, target specific communities, and share resources.

Trust, resources/services and money are the three important elements that kept organizations participating at the coordinating tables. Among the primary factors contributing to a lack of cooperation were the absence of incentives or expectation that groups should participate in formal coordination efforts, and the lack of staffing to work out beneficial terms. The structures, requirements and functions of tables often were not developed early enough in the election cycle. In highly contested states, national efforts were not sufficiently sensitized to the culture of local community-based groups and often did not strive to integrate into the community. Not all groups need to work with all other groups, but it is easier to support those who find it in their common interest to coordinate.[22] At its best, collaboration can facilitate sharing of best practices and resources (precinct maps, voter files) and identify common functions (technical and legal assistance, training, voter protection, funding, research and materials). However, such civic engagement collaborations require appropriate support infrastructure, staffing, relationship building, and the clarity of goals.

9 "Tech"ing it to the streets

Web-based technologies were used and experimented with during the 2004 election cycle to facilitate collaboration, communication, content/news creation, fundraising, and organizing or collective action.

Voter registration efforts where citizens either registered online or downloaded voter registration forms to print, complete and submit by mail were particularly visible. Some of these programs provided online registration incentives such as music downloads. Filling out registration forms online has the built-in advantage of instantly creating a new voter database. However, it is not clear whether people who fill out voter registration forms online would have registered by other means.

Given the lack of targeting employed in most of these campaigns, the impact of "email fatigue" on the one hand, and the positive results seen through personal contact on the other, it seems as though new technologies might be most effective when they enhance a field operation and are integrated into an ongoing organizing strategy. Examples of this on land and online nexus include: online registration with phone follow-up; shared, web-accessible databases for more efficient management of campaign operations; online recruitment of field volunteers; virtual phone banks and web-based predictive dialers;[23] and web sites that let citizens verify and update publicly available information that is then used to streamline assistance and information via telephone hotlines. For example, citizen corrections and updates to www.mypollingplace.com, helped voters identify their polling place and improved polling place location information provided through election protection hotlines.[24]

With open source[25] software, smaller groups of programmers can create tools without the overhead and profit imperatives of corporations. These tools can also be scaled and customized easily. Feedback loops unique to online tools allow users to improve technology even as it is deployed. Online tools allow decentralization of work tasks, which can be distributed among geographically dispersed groups and volunteers.

In addition to training and technical assistance, a culture change is needed to take advantage of new technological possibilities. For example, taking advantage of open source software requires a greater sharing of tools and information, and an emphasis on decentralized decision making and cross-organizational efforts and campaigns. Online and digital tools also hold promise for engaging marginalized communities and leveling the playing field for nontraditional candidates, but achieving this aim requires developing technologies that meet the needs, economy and culture of marginalized communities. Given that Generation Y[26] will turn the United States into a majority non-white society by 2050 and the Millennials are the first generation to surpass the Baby Boomers in number, the ease of individualizing messages to different constituencies and in different languages through the Internet increases the value of these tools for reaching historically underrepresented groups of voters in the next couple of generations.

10 A ruler is an important but limited measuring stick

The 2004 election cycle had greater voter registration accountability than any previous one. Enhanced voter verification produced an increased likelihood that names of newly registered voters would reach the relevant election board's voter rolls.[27] National Voice's "November 2 Campaign" also developed accountability measures for their voter mobilization work. Ideally, performance benchmarks enable large groups to document their work and small groups to establish themselves as viable operations. Accountability by goals and timetables also allows groups to measure their progress and move quickly to secure training or support when they are not meeting goals. And because elections are about measuring, it makes sense that Election Year voter engagement work uses primarily quantifiable measures.

Nonetheless, not every element related to building an organization's capacity for civic engagement objectives can be quantified. Indeed, in a few instances numerically-based support had a negative impact on an organization's long-term effectiveness in relation to its constituency base, as in cases where the need to register large numbers in a compressed period shifted operations from an organization's ongoing priorities. Significant organizational achievements are reflected in leadership development, board commitment, staff retention, reputation of a community organization, visibility in the media and among policymakers, and attainment of policy outcomes. More subtle measurement vehicles need to be developed to accommodate these assets and accomplishments, which may be built over a period of time extending beyond an election cycle. As noted above, relationship building, along with other important infrastructure for making voter engagement gains, is developed at other stages of the civic engagement process. Additionally, accountability and evaluation must reflect programmatic variation for distinct cultural and geographic circumstances, as discussed in lesson 2 (above). Organizations need to be clear about their goals, and then must ensure appropriate planning, staffing and funding in order to achieve them.

Top Ten Lessons Endnotes

1 Lessons are provided in sequential order for clarity.

2 Yale political science professors Donald Green and Alan Gerber, 2003.

3 This is reflected in the level and timing of grantmaking for different voter engagement activities (see funding survey report in Appendix A) and in organizational planning, staffing, etc.

4 This reflects many organizations' lack of understanding regarding how they can legally raise issues in a c-3 context during an election cycle, organizations not building into their plans educational activities such as candidate forums, as well as the lower priority placed on funding these activities.

5 Organizations employed strategies and voter contact programs that maximize geographically-based opportunities provided by state laws and regulations governing the voting process, e.g., mail in voter registration, same day registration, early voting, absentee voting.

6 The high number of ineligible voters in some target areas, language barriers, and the transient nature of target constituencies or those who keep unconventional hours, posed significant challenges for many groups.

7 I.e., land line telephones are no longer effective ways of reaching this and other constituency groups that are highly mobile.

8 Additional best practices include: Some empirical studies support the multiplier effect that voter operations have. Studies show that voting is habit-forming, thus participating more regularly in elections reinforces the constituent's habit of voting. Many field organizations also reported that engaging voters at a deeper level, i.e., as election workers (canvasser, poll worker, volunteer) on Election Day, was shown to be a successful recipe for ongoing commitment; some noted it as a life-altering experience. Beyond work with field organizations, opportunities for engaging young people and setting them on the path of a lifetime of voting (and voter advocacy) include student grants for Election Day work and other funding support provided under the Help America Vote Act and other incentives (e.g., obtaining community service credits). Further empirical studies show that engaging one person makes it more likely that his/her friends become engaged.

9 For the purpose of this document, community-based organizations refer to groups that are rooted in a community, regardless of whether they are large or small, single/multi-state operations, issue-focused, etc.

10 Some community-based organizations indicated that the competition for volunteers with national organizations that were recruiting the same volunteers and paying them to do registration work put the local organizations at a significant disadvantage and caused significant hardship since they could not compete financially.

11 Groups newer to electoral organizing acknowledged the difference between the organizing skills required to do nonpartisan electoral organizing as distinct from the community organizing skills they had on staff. Access to training and campaign professionals was mentioned as a tool that could make a significant difference for the community organizations beginning to do this work.

12 Funding cycles that support voter engagement work beyond a national cycle (i.e., through a subsequent local election cycle) provide opportunities for an organization to marry on-year and off-year work and transition more smoothly. The Liberty Vote! Project awarded grants to organizations conducting work from national through local election funding cycles during 2004-05.

13 Enhanced databases are lists that have been enhanced with various pieces of data, including age, jurisdictional information, groups membership, etc.

14 Voter Protection refers to all (pre-Election Day, Election Day and post-Election Day) activities that ensure a voter's equal access to the vote and that his/her vote is counted (e.g., removing structural barriers to registration and voting and litigating where necessary, advocating for improved election administration practices, educating voters about voting procedures and their voting rights, and fighting unintentional and intentional intimidation/suppression).

15 Efficiency in undertaking these tasks can be secured in many places through collaboration via state coordinating tables.

16 Though there is no empirical evidence that messages must be tailored to a particular group in order to be effective.

17 This message developed for New Voters Project (NVP), countered cynicism by not having to promise results if people voted.

18 Women's Voices. Women Vote. (WVWV) spearheaded this work, with Celinda Lake and Stan and Anna Greenberg doing background research on likes and dislikes and testing messaging approaches.

19 These two national constituency groups' use of message are highlighted because they both based their outreach on reasonably uniform and pre-tested c-3 messages, and because they attained the most significant increases in turnout from 2000 to 2004. Additional polling studies regarding this linkage are available from NVP and WVWV.

20 A communication strategy whereby people receive a steady, converged stream of mutually-reinforcing messages from a wide spectrum of selected communication sources, and each successive communication is timed to build on what came before.

21 MacWilliams, Robinson & Partners.

22 Coordination, collaboration, networking, and mentoring were valued by the field, both for yielding significant benefits on function and efficiencies, and in order to develop greater cross-cultural understanding.

23 Predictive dialers are the computers that telemarketers use to make the phone calls; they screen out busy signals, people not at home, disconnects and 75% of answering machines. This allows volunteers to spend their time talking to voters instead of dialing the phone and not reaching anybody. Web-based dialers allow you to connect to a predictive dialer through the web, using a computer and a telephone.

24 Election Protection refers to a program that primarily monitors elections (Election Day, primaries and early voting) through polling place monitors and a national hotline that provides voters and others with immediate access to information, and where necessary to lawyers, to enforce their rights.

25 Open source development is the development of software where the programming code is open to allow many people around the world to develop the product simultaneously and inexpensively.

26 Born during a baby bulge that demographers locate between 1979 and 1994, they are as young as five and as old as 20, with the largest slice still a decade away from adolescence. And at 60 million strong, more than three times the size of Generation X, they're the biggest thing to hit the American scene since the 72 million baby boomers.

27 One suggestion made for revising the numeric measure for effectiveness of registration is to make organizations accountable for the number of voters that make it to the rolls rather than the number of registration cards submitted (such a system would require effective and timely database feedback to organizations as described in the voter protection lesson).

VOTER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY IN 2004: ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PROMISING AREAS FOR GROWTH

During the 2004 election cycle, voter engagement organizations and their funders experimented with strategies and derived lessons that may alter the way that funders and practitioners approach this work. The Voter Engagement Evaluation Project (VEEP) highlighted three areas where additional funding can enhance the effectiveness of voter engagement work:

- Integrating nonpartisan electoral work with constituency and/or issue organizing
- Using voter files to enhance field operations
- Coordinating local, statewide and national voter engagement activity

Integrating Nonpartisan Electoral Work With Constituency and/or Issue Organizing

Organizations that integrate intensive voter engagement programming as part of an overall strategy, including building lasting community relationships and ongoing issue education, excel in their ability to foster long-term civic engagement. Many field organizations learned that the most effective means of delivering voter engagement messages is through messengers who have direct relationships to particular constituents. This lesson may be particularly relevent to faith-based groups and service organizations which VEEP research found are a significant untapped resource. The People for the American Way Foundation's Sanctified Seven Program working with the African-American Ministers Leadership Council, for example, utilized the ministers' standing in the community to recruit and train individuals and church leaders for voter engagement operations. This is an important base to build upon in the future.

Numerous community-based organizations (CBOs)[1] had their first experience with electoral organizing during the 2004 election cycle. In interviews conducted for the VEEP, many of these first-time participants found the experience rewarding and pointed to an array of organizational benefits resulting from their new voter engagement work.

Many CBOs reported that voter engagement work helped their staff and constituents understand the essential connection between electoral politics and policy change. Others commented that their voter engagement focus gave

them more influence with elected officials, who in turn paid more attention to the organizations' central mission.

> As the affordable housing advocacy group Neighbor-to-Neighbor Massachusetts learned from their intensified voter engagement work, *"[Now we are] recognized by elected officials in districts – they have paid more attention to low income issues and members of the groups."*

Issue- and constituency-based organizations reaped other benefits from voter engagement work including leadership development, added technology infrastructure and know-how, heightened media presence and enhanced relationships with other local organizations. Many groups expressed interest in maintaining a focus on voter engagement during off years to continue to cultivate these unexpected benefits. Some organizations have modeled programmatic integration, such as Southern Echo: *"Voter engagement is not an add-on; it is imperative to meeting the mission."* Yet, few organizations have been able to conduct strategic planning on their own to ensure that voter engage-

ment work benefits their organizations' issue agendas. They need—and have requested from funders— technical assistance in making this integration effective.

Ongoing Challenges

Nonprofit practitioners learned that electoral organizing requires different skills from those used in community- and/or issue-organizing. A few community organizations hired experienced campaign staff to coordinate their nonpartisan voter engagement work, and if resources allow these same organizations are now planning to incorporate this voter engagement expertise in-house.

Additionally, some groups–for reasons such as inexperience with door-to-door operations or economies of scale (door-to-door work is significantly more labor-intensive and costly)–opted to undertake site-based voter registration work (i.e., at high-frequency locations such as shopping centers, festivals, etc.). Site-based registration was particularly effective with outreach to young people. The New Voters Project (a program run by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group and the George Washington Graduate School of Political Management), for example, used creative approaches such as undertaking voter registration on college campuses when large numbers of students are waiting in line for unrelated procedures–to get parking permits, register for classes, etc. Some empirical tests have shown that site-based registration can be more cost-effective than door-to-door registration, yet site-based registration has a limited ability to build the quality of relationships between organizations and constituents that increase the effectiveness of follow-up Get Out The Vote (GOTV) contacts.

An area of particular difficulty identified by both field organizers and funders is discerning which voter engagement activities are permissible for §501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations. The fear of unintentionally engaging in partisan activity regularly constrains voter engagement efforts, and both organizers and funders expressed a need for greater legal training and guidance.

Another challenge to integrating voter engagement work with community organizing was the extensive volunteer trainings that were required to complete complex data input work. High volunteer turnover rates were a problem as well. The observations of Holli Holiday of the national voter engagement group Project Vote were typical: *"We did an unprecedented level of training, but there were still some bad [registration] cards. We talk about training, but the biggest emphasis was on retraining."*

The Los Angeles-based Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE) integrated electoral work with ongoing issue organizing work to overcome some of these obstacles. SCOPE combines community organizing strategies with tools of electoral work to advance both agendas–such as using voter contacts to identify neighborhood leaders, educate voters on issues, and undertake grassroots lobbying, as well as using continuously updated databases and technologies for analysis, mapping, targeting, and evaluation.

> Drawing on its experience with integrating voter engagement work and working across issue silos, The Environmental Health Coalition notes: *"The leadership of the organization has changed to believing that we cannot ignore the electoral work and just focus on the policy work. If you want to change the policy, you must engage in the electoral debate."*

While foundations can and should support nonpartisan civic engagement activities, and nonprofits can and should integrate nonpartisan civic engagement activities into their ongoing missions and work, there are different Internal Revenue Service (IRS) restrictions that apply to private, public and community foundations in how they can support this work. In addition, nonprofits need to understand the various rules, conditions and restrictions on lobbying and undertaking civic engagement work. Therefore, both funders and nonprofits should take advantage of the wide range of legal resources and training available from such technical assistance providers as the Alliance for Justice (www.allianceforjustice.org) and the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest (www.clpi.org).

Funding that is received early enough in an election cycle, divided appropriately among the different facets of voter engagement work (registration, education, protection and mobilization), and maintained at a sustainable level during off-years, allows organizations to retain key staff from cycle to cycle, decrease the need for retraining, and gives groups time to create detailed work plans for integrating voter engagement activities into their permanent §501(c)(3) work.

To incorporate effectively voter engagement activity into the work of constituency-and issue-based organizations, both nonprofit leaders and funders emphasized the importance of timely, evenly distributed, and sustainable funding. Unfortunately, according to a representative sample of voter engagement organizations surveyed for the VEEP, §501(c)(3) funding in 2004 fell short of these goals. The majority of funding was made available in the last six months of the election cycle, with the largest amount coming in the three-month period preceding Election Day. Without early funding, groups were unable to hire needed staff at the most critical times, and could not invest in the long-term strategies that would sustain the organization's capacity to conduct future voter engagement work. A number of groups were forced to reduce their registration goals or otherwise narrow their work. Some groups also indicated that organization staff and other resources supported voter engagement work to an unexpected degree, and thus the true costs to the organization were not apparent in their budgets. For example, the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project noted that *"dollar formulas used by some donors for funding were extremely low…[these] need to be revised dramatically upwards and adjusted to each group's circumstances."*

Funds also fell disproportionately short in allocations to voter education and voter protection efforts. The comparatively small amount of support available for these efforts was insufficient to maintain relationships with newly-registered voters through Election Day, let alone after the polls closed. A representative survey of voter engagement organizations determined that funding for nonpartisan voter engagement work was allocated in the following proportions:[2]

- **voter registration – 43%**
- **voter mobilization – 37%**
- **voter protection –12%**
- **voter education – 8%**

The VEEP survey indicated (and subsequent funding data confirm) that there has been a steep post-election reduction in voter engagement funding. This has limited organizations' abilities to implement the valuable lessons learned in 2004 and may force many organizations to abandon their plans for long-term voter engagement work. Most organizations have laid off key staff and neglected the voter engagement tools and infrastructure that were developed during the campaign. Nonprofit field leaders acknowledge that scaling-down during off-cycle periods is natural and even appropriate, as a group's attention shifts back to longer-term goals. Nonetheless, ebbs and flows should be more seamless. Organizations should maintain the capacity during the off-years both to use effectively the inevitable election-year windfalls in funding as well as resources and staff from national organizations. Kristen Engberg of the JEHT Foundation observed that *"there is still a gap between funders who believe that organizing for [the off-year] is important because it helps us understand how we are able to leverage electoral work to move the policy work along, versus funders who believe that the focus should be solely on [even-year], because is it just about the election."*

Areas that were cited as crucial for focusing off-year support include targeted training, technology adaptation, and fundraising to support expanded field work during the next election cycle. Retaining this basic capacity would enable organizations to draw on the relationships and expertise they developed during the previous campaign. Otherwise they will have to retrace steps, rebuild their databases, reconnect with target voters, hire and train new staff, and address the same infrastructure challenges they had overcome successfully during the prior election cycle.[3]

VEEP discussions emphasized the need to understand appropriate, long-term planning and funding as the joint responsibility of practitioners and donors. While new approaches and experimentation are still needed, Meg Gage of Proteus Fund noted that *"funders' willingness to make the connection among voting, organizing, and policy change, is a huge step forward."*

Effective Use of Voter Files to Enhance Field Operations

A "Voter File" is a database file that is updated by the state or county elections division in each state and includes such information as the history of the voter's participation in prior elections.

Voter files were a boon to voter engagement work in the 2004 election cycle. Database software enabled groups to match their membership lists against local government voter files, and to track newly registered voters for follow-up contact. Groups could then enhance their voter lists with newly-acquired information on a voter's issue interests, legislative district, or preferred time and method of contact, while checking their existing data against other records for accuracy. For example, the Gill Foundation's Democracy Project — a national network of 350 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) organizations and others supportive of GLBT equality — regularly matched its member organizations' records against such databases as the US Postal Service's national change-of-address listing and current legislative district data. Similarly, Women's Voices. Women Vote. (WVWV), a national organization dedicated to increasing single women's electoral participation, translated a demographic list of single women into a geographical canvass operation in four states. These data allowed the organizations using these records to reach out more effectively and efficiently to potential voters.

Beyond efforts to build accurate, detailed voter files, some organizations were able to share voter files with each other using compatible platforms. Both broad centralized databases, such as America's Families United (with 2.5 million records) and constituency-specific databases were made available to partner organizations. Both broad centralized databases, such as America's Families United (with 2.5 million records) and constituency-specific databases such as

those of Gill Foundation's Democracy Project and Women's Voices. Women Vote., were made available to partner organizations for voter engagement, fundraising and additional educational purposes. The Women's Voices. Women Vote. list was shared with other §501(c)(3) organizations free of charge. List sharing such as this helped to make voter engagement work in 2004 markedly more efficient by ensuring that different organizations' outreach efforts stemmed from the same list, sparing many groups from building their own databases from scratch. As a result, nonpartisan coalitions of groups were able to catalyze turnout among pools of their own constituents as well as non-aligned citizens who met their district or demographic criteria. Low-propensity voters (defined as voters who have turned out in 0 to 2 of the preceding 4 elections) were a frequent choice for such contact, which often proved effective.

Most of these voter database projects were built and shared for the first time in the 2004 election cycle and thus encountered numerous technical difficulties. Many files were of poor quality, and updated voter files were often provided to organizations too late in the election cycle to be useful for planning GOTV contacts.

Voter engagement organizations with limited technological capacity were at a particular disadvantage in obtaining and managing voter files during the election cycle.

Joshua Hoyt of the Illinois Coalition on Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) describes first-time efforts by community-based organizations to conduct electoral organizing using voter files this way: *"If community organizing is like Spanish, then electoral organizing is Italian; they are related languages but require translation. Yet, the translation of these via the use of voter files is Latin. Political organizers thought that community organizers understood Latin, but they didn't."*

Many groups lacked the ability to match new registrations to existing voter files or to update their lists with new information, such as change-of-address records, thereby rendering their lists out-of-date and of little use for conducting voter mobilization contacts. Incompatible databases made data sharing among groups impossible. Inaccurate data – often due to unreliable vendors or poorly trained technical staffers or volunteers – made registration and GOTV efforts much more difficult.

Indeed, many groups that suffer the greatest technology disadvantages work with communities whose language barriers and highly transient populations demand more technology to serve their communications and tracking needs. This technology gap exacerbates the challenges groups face in meeting funders' accountability standards, as they do not have the technological support to help them define quantifiable goals and to track accomplishments or needs over time.

Despite tremendous difficulties and limitations, field organizations now recognize that voter file applications can make their voter engagement work and their ongoing organizational work more productive. Hence, while voter file-based nonpartisan voter engagement work fell substantially short of achieving its potential in 2004, the investment sparked a revolution in the way that nonprofit organizations approach this work, promising great potential for the future if planning, funding, quality data, and qualified training and technical assistance are in place.

Increased Coordination of Voter Engagement Activity

In the 2004 election voter engagement organizations were challenged to work together more closely. New partnerships formed at the national, state, and local levels. By coordinating site-specific, voter engagement work, groups reconciled territorial overlaps, minimized duplication, and increased efficiency. Moreover, since many organizations lack the capacity, to undertake all critical components of voter engagement (registration, education, protection, and mobilization), it is crucial that funders stress coordination of voter engagement activities, both among their grantees and their fellow funders.[4] Anne Bartley of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors noted: *"There are many progressive national and local groups that have reach and potential reach, but this can also be a weakness if left uncoordinated."*

The largest collaboration effort was National Voice, which was created following an April 2003 conversation among 50 national voter engagement nonprofits and a few lead funders contemplating how they might coordinate their efforts. The organization was launched two months later and became the largest effort ever undertaken by national organizations to coordinate §501(c)(3) voter engagement work. National Voice made these efforts accessible through the Voter Project database, a free-of-charge, searchable online catalogue of voter work being done by groups around the country.

National Voice's November 2 coordinated GOTV campaign linked the major national nonpartisan registration groups in an unprecedented nationally coordinated GOTV campaign. As one field leader put it: *"The November 2 campaign was an extremely effective innovation because it enabled organizations to focus on the geographical areas and constituencies they organize on an ongoing basis."* Participants included Center for Community Change, Clean Water Fund, Earth Day Network, NAACP National Voter Fund, Project Vote in partnership with ACORN, People for the American Way's Sanctified Seven Program, Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project, USAction Education Fund, and Voting is Power.

Other noteworthy national collaborative efforts included America's Families United, a nonpartisan organization that supported national and community groups to register new voters in low-income and historically underrepresented communities across the country. The Campaign for Communities,[5] an environmental justice coalition started by the Earth Day Network in 2003, coordinated the voter work of environmental advocates and African American,

Latino and other low-propensity voters. The U.S. Public Interest Research Group, in partnership with the George Washington Graduate School of Political Management and with funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts, created New Voters Project—a network of 1,000 colleges, businesses, and community-based organizations nationwide to mobilize youth voters. Center for Community Change, a national social justice organization, partnered with 53 organizations in 26 states to launch the Community Voting Project to register and mobilize low-income voters from urban centers to rural regions and Native American communities. Together, these coordinated activities helped to turn out millions of new voters from historically underrepresented communities on Election Day.

Importantly, National Voice also worked at the state and local level. It organized new or supported existing city and state coordinating "tables", forums through which organizations could distribute geographic assignments, share voter lists, coordinate activity and discuss legal issues.

While most voter engagement organizers found collaborations useful and rewarding, a few felt that these rewards came at a cost. In post-election interviews, some voter-engagement organizers described dysfunctional state tables, in which confusion over leadership, decision-making processes, and accountability hampered efforts to work together effectively. In particular, local organizers mentioned the challenges posed by national voter engagement operations "parachuting" into their communities. Many noted that some national groups entering the fray in contested states were disinterested in local issues and capacity and halfheartedly participated in state coordinating tables. Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP), based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, describe their experience: *"We had a local table prior to the national groups showing up that served as a clearinghouse for information about the work. Locals started meeting in January, but national groups didn't engage until the summer. It got hard to keep track of who was in the state and what they were doing, and there were some instances of groups not adhering to accountability measures that the group had put in place at the beginning of the process. So many people, so much going on, not everyone was participating–really messy."*

Nonprofit voter engagement leaders offered the following suggestions for how funders should approach coordination more effectively in the future:

• **Prioritize the funding of coordinating tables.** Early and adequate funding can help make state coordinating tables more strategic by allowing them to hire needed staff and attend to necessary structural agreements and functions such as information sharing, voter file management, and resource development and deployment.

• **Provide year-round support for collaborative efforts.** Nonprofit field leaders felt that while early funding is important, ongoing support to maintain coordination work between election cycles is essential to allow groups to quickly expand their coordination efforts in an election year, continue to strengthen their relationships in the off-years, and work toward longer-term, civic participation goals.

• **Ensure that groups undertaking collaborative efforts develop a written plan.** These plans should contain clear goals, roles, and budgets on which all participating organizations and funders can agree. This helps facilitate cooperation among the participants, making organizations more accountable to each other and to funders.

• **Urge national groups to connect with local groups.** Local voter engagement leaders urged funders to encourage national groups to work more closely with local groups in the future.

INNOVATIONS
AND INTERVENTIONS

S everal voter engagement activities that were supported to a lesser extent in 2004 also hold promise of improving the effectiveness and reach of voter registration, education, protection, and mobilization:

- **Efforts to remove structural barriers to voting in historically underrepresented communities**

- **Effective communications strategies**

- **Promising technological innovations**

Efforts to remove structural barriers to voting in historically underrepresented communities

After the 2000 election revealed the inadequacies of the American election system, a diverse group of advocates and funders became increasingly interested in redressing these dysfunctions. Many funders directed their support toward voter engagement work among historically disenfranchised citizens, since marginalized communities were plagued with voter challenges including improperly trained poll workers and faulty polling machines, resulting in long lines at the polls and intentional or unintentional acts to suppress voter turnout[6]. In September 2005, the US Election Assistance Commission released a report that paints a bleak picture of the inequality of access to election services in minority-majority areas–from inadequate voting machine allocation and technology, to understaffed precincts, insufficiently trained poll workers, and faulty voter registration protocols.[7]

Because of the obstacles facing their target voters--often infrequent or nonvoters—voter engagement efforts in historically disenfranchised communities should devote particular attention and funding to voter protection. Often, a host of factors– including language barriers, confusion about voter eligibility, mixed-citizenship-status families, a sense of exclusion from spheres of influence, mistrust of community outsiders, and highly transient populations– make educating and mobilizing voters in these communities particularly complicated, but essential. Thomasina Williams of Ford Foundation stated: *"The real key to getting these people involved is to empower them. If people don't feel that their day-to-day needs are being met, voting is not in their universe. 20% of people don't vote because they don't understand the process, or how the process affects the issues they care about…Education needs to be a big part of this empowerment issue."*

> **Comprehensive voter protection work requires multiple and complex measures to safeguard the franchise. These efforts include ongoing relationships with local election officials, making sure newly registered voters are added to the voter rolls in a timely fashion, advancing and monitoring relevant changes in local election law and procedure, ensuring that election administration in marginalized communities receives sufficient attention and funding from local government, educating people as to the location of their polling place and about their voting rights, and ensuring that they are able to exercise these rights on Election Day.**

Groups such as Advancement Project and Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law provided legal assistance and troubleshooting for field organizations. Project Vote, in partnership with ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), prioritized meeting and establishing relationships with municipal elections officials to develop working agreements about election procedures and to address problems as they came up.

The NAACP National Voter Fund, among other groups, worked to ensure the restoration of voting rights and participation by ex-felons. Despite these efforts, most voter protection work in 2004 was limited to reactive litigation or Election Day poll watching. An "Election Protection" coalition effort led by People for the American Way Foundation amassed an unprecedented cadre of volunteers and generated tremendous visibility. The primary lesson that emerged is that to be effective, voter protection must be proactive, and ongoing.

Effective Communications Strategies

Effective communication is a crucial component of voter engagement work during and after the election cycle. Some organizations, such as the SPIN Project and Partnership for Immigrant Leadership and Action, offered organizations technical assistance for media and communications work in the 2004 election cycle. Yet, many voter engagement organizers were unprepared for the media exposure they received. Nonprofit leaders missed opportunities to use the media to their advantage or observed their efforts misrepresented in the press.

> Center for Community Change's Community Voting Project found that partner groups were ill-prepared to address false and negative attacks and had difficulty overcoming the image created by this adverse publicity. Organizations now realize that in order to raise their local profile and increase their effectiveness, they need to showcase their efforts and gain message sophistication.

Post-election discussions identified key aspects of messaging on which voter engagement groups and funders should focus:

- **The messenger matters.** §501(c)(3) voter engagement messages work best when delivered by trusted individuals. In 2002, for example, surveys and focus groups on GOTV messages among Latinos revealed that Latino pop stars and movie stars were unpersuasive messengers, but that teachers and representatives of trusted organizations were highly effective.[8] Marcello Gaete of the National Association for Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) summarized the common viewpoint: *"Jennifer Lopez doesn't know anything about the price of milk or my family; the closer the messenger is to the community, the better."*

- **There's no substitute for direct contact.** Yale University political science professors Donald Green and Alan Gerber found that face-to-face visits[9] are significantly more effective at mobilizing individuals to vote than impersonal contacts through phone banks, literature distribution, or email.

- **Reach out to voters in appropriate languages and through relevant media.** Voter materials should be multilingual where appropriate. Additionally, ethnic media should be used to deliver messages to ethnic Americans. According to the first-ever comprehensive survey of ethnic American adults on their media usage, 13% of the adults in the United States prefer to get their news from ethnic media, including more than half of Hispanic adults, the largest growing demographic group.[10]

- **Reinforce the message.** Some organizations successfully experimented using different media venues to advance their message. This strategy, known as message convergence, provides people with a steady stream of mutually-reinforcing messages from a wide spectrum of communication sources. Each successive communication is designed to build on what came before it.[11]

- **The message matters.** Direct voter contact from a trusted messenger delivering a local message is the best way to engage voters in target communities. While Center for Community Change's national message was "empowerment through voting," their issue or constituency-based affiliates led with messages that varied depending on local partners and individual communities. Examples include:

  - *Immigrant rights: "Our rights are being threatened. You need to vote!"*

  - *Native American: "We are seriously under-represented. Your vote really matters."*

  - *Faith-based: "As a person of faith, voting is a responsibility."*

  - *Rural/Welfare rights: "We need to expand our power. Vote!"*

Constituency groups such as young voters (through New Voters Project), unmarried women (through Women's Voices. Women Vote.) and African Americans (through the NAACP National Voter Fund) researched, developed and tested messages. Women's Voices noted that message discipline was key to success and reported that efforts that consistently used the "change agent theme" as a central message resonated with unmarried women, regardless of age, socioeconomic background, or race. In the case of young voters, "If you vote, they will listen" resonated as a message that validated young people as "players."

Promising Technological Innovations

The 2004 election cycle was characterized by a flowering of innovative technology use in §501(c)(3) voter engagement efforts.

Web-based technologies allowed organizations to collaborate through online workspaces, discussion boards, email, instant messaging, chat rooms, cell phone text messaging, online petitions, blogs, and podcasting,[12] and to use the internet to register new voters and coordinate offline gatherings and activities, such as "Meet Ups" and mass demonstrations. The national youth-focused group New Voters Project captured hundreds of thousands of email addresses through their voter registration websites, which it used to recruit 10,000 student volunteers. Rock The Vote partnered with the Motorola Corporation to sign up approximately 100,000 young voters to receive GOTV messages through cell phone text messages, including information on finding the nearest polling site. A broad coalition of nonprofits also used the Internet to establish two "virtual phone banks," votercall.org and justvotenow.org, which together coordinated nearly 100,000 GOTV phone calls to newly registered voters in a number of states. Voter engagement groups also used database software and handheld technologies such as personal digital assistants (PDAs) to manage voter files and to coordinate field operations. The national voter engagement group, Voting Is Power, for example, used global positioning software-enabled cell phones to track volunteer vans.

Technology is often inexpensive. Through the use and development of open source software--where the programming code is open to allow people around the world to simultaneously develop the product--technology has nearly unlimited growth potential.

BEYOND THE 2004 ELECTION CYCLE:
NEXT STEPS

The funder and nonprofit assessments and discussions that followed the 2004 election and were the focus of the June 2005 Voter Engagement Evaluation Project (VEEP) convening have yielded important recommendations for organizing and funding future voter engagement activities. This section describes current thinking among civic-participation funders and includes recommendations from funders who collaborated to create the VEEP, and from the expanded group that attended the June convening.[13] Priority recommendations that emerged include:

To increase the effectiveness of voter engagement work:

- Support the development of and prioritize field resources and capacities

- Support national, state, and local coordinating "tables" or other ongoing opportunities for coordination and collaboration

- Streamline grants processes and decision making

- Share information and avoid duplication

- Collaborate with grassroots organizations and organizers to advance effective ways of planning, conducting, and measuring voter engagement work

To increase the overall level of support for voter engagement work:

- Educate issue-based funder colleagues about the importance of supporting their grantees to incorporate voter engagement as a component of their ongoing work

- Deepen the commitment of existing civic participation funders to support off-year infrastructure development, planning and other work that advances effective election-year efforts

- Expand the pool of donors who support voter registration, education, protection, and mobilization

- Provide technical support and training of nonprofits on the legal issues related to undertaking nonpartisan civic/voter engagement work

To advance these objectives, the following items were recommended:

1 **Document models that integrate voter engagement organizing with ongoing constituency and issue organizing**

Groups need assistance in developing strategies to promote their issues with voter engagement work. It was not clear to funders what this integration would look like, what it would cost and what capabilities it would repair. Emerging from this conversation was a call to identify, publicize and promote case studies that exemplify best practices.

Participants at the June VEEP convening suggested a number of parameters for developing and showcasing these models. The case studies should:

- **Draw from a diverse range of community-based, state, and national organizations that vary in missions, size, focal issue, and population served**

- **Recognize and articulate any drawbacks to sustained voter engagement work**

- **Identify the costs associated with an integrated approach, including the capacity – technical, staffing, and otherwise – that such an effort requires**

Additionally, funders suggested that it would be helpful to develop case studies that examine best practices in grant-making to support this integrated work. Over the next year, Funders' Committee for Civic Participation will develop and widely disseminate a series of case studies along these lines.

2 Address the root causes of disenfranchisement

In the 2004 election cycle, funders focused much of their voter engagement grantmaking on those constituencies that are typically underrepresented in the electoral arena, and the VEEP convening briefly addressed the removal of barriers to participation and enfranchisement.

In December 2004, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation convened a gathering of funders and nonprofit leaders to consider election administration problems that effectively disenfranchised voters during the election. This conversation determined that the core problem was the failure to reach consensus on equitable and uniform rules and practices in the decentralized and informal system that characterizes the administration of elections.[14] Subsequent studies that prioritize reform topics and suggest some remedies include reports by the Carter-Baker Commission on Federal Election Reform, The Century Foundation, League of Women Voters, and The Election Center.

The election reform community is addressing structural barriers at both the federal level (e.g., reauthorization of Voting Rights Act sections that are due to expire in 2007) and state level (e.g., felon re-enfranchisement). A few nonprofit efforts and funders are advancing structural reforms to elections operations (e.g., vote by mail and early voting) that might reduce barriers to voting, though there is some debate over whether these reforms actually help expand the electorate to include nonvoters and low-propensity voters or whether they primarily serve to make voting more convenient for citizens who would vote in any event.[15] One key area of interest to funders relates to administrative advocacy work that is performed by groups at the state and local levels with election administrators and legislators, to ensure access to the franchise. A small group of funders is working with field organizations to prioritize immediate and longer-term agenda items under the broad rubric of promoting and protecting the franchise.

3 Facilitate data use, sharing, and management

An accurate, comprehensive and nationwide voter-registration database is critical to voter engagement efforts, both for the organizations doing the work and for the funders evaluating their performance. Voter files and good list management allow groups to figure out what is working and if they need to do something differently. The appropriate design of an operational database can also advance voter protection efforts, by including specific fields (e.g., whether or not the citizen box was checked) that can help to identify the source of delays in the approval of a registration application. Furthermore, maintaining enhanced voter lists enables the field to measure if particular campaigns create lasting voters or one-time voters and whether issue campaigns spur voter turnout.

Building a functioning nationwide voter-registration database entails significant, long-term investments, including initial funding to support planning on technical, legal, and governance issues, construction of the database itself, and a substantial operating budget once a database is up and running. National organizations and funders are discussing the prospect of piloting a voter file project in a few states during the 2006 election to test a system that could provide lessons as this nationwide database effort is being built. As these discussions move forward, it is important to factor in the role of nonpartisan field organizations in helping to design a functional database model. USAction Education Fund, which utilized and experimented with voter files extensively, stressed the importance of "*obtaining voter files early through a third party or a consortium of groups, implementing rules in advance about access, cost, control of data, and turnaround time by which data is updated and returned.*"

Once a database is built, organizations will likely pay for the front-end software they use to access it. As the field continues to focus on voter file-based work, foundations need to support organizations that will rely on these databases.[16] This support includes training and technical assistance to maintain and manage lists, mechanisms for sharing lists, and coordinating list-based work among organizations at local, state, and national levels.[17] Additionally, groups will benefit from capacity building to use enhanced lists to advance other organizational purposes from communications to fundraising. A group of funders is assessing the support needed from foundations to advance this agenda.

4 **Increase coordination and collaboration**

Michael Caudell-Feagan of Pew Charitable Trusts, contrasted coordinated voter engagement work in 2004 to that in previous years. *"There was more communication among donor communities, more coordinated strategies, and more joint work in the field. We do ourselves and this field a disservice if we let those practices and that momentum atrophy. One of the things we can congratulate ourselves on is the fact that we're even having this conversation now...the fact that we're already anticipating what we want to see in 2006 is a dramatic step forward."*

Funders articulate a need for greater coordination, particularly among field practitioners and funders interested in state-based work. Some funders suggest a "deep mapping" approach, in which strategies are identified and superimposed onto a map of local, state and regional organizations that have the capacity to do nonpartisan voter engagement work. Others suggest that best practices and lessons learned in one state or region might be showcased at regional convenings designed to highlight best practices.

5 **Develop and expand the pool of civic participation donors and funders**

Increased funding for voter engagement work, particularly among community, family, and state-level funders, was identified as a key goal of VEEP convening participants. To maintain and expand the heightened interest in voter engagement work, convening participants suggested efforts to enroll donors who may be unaware of how voter engagement funding can advance their issues and support the missions of their constituencies. Patricia Bauman of the Bauman Foundation asserted that *"We need to cross-pollinate and strengthen the field by reaching out to funders of individual issue areas. We've agreed that if we want more resources for voter engagement work, we have to urge expansion of the portfolios of existing foundations by helping to connect issue work to civic participation."*

• **Peer-to-peer donor outreach** Many funders note that peer-to-peer donor networking is highly effective, and suggest developing information packets (preferably web accessible), with targeted talking points to spur greater interest.

• **Targeted outreach to subsets of donors** In the 2004 election cycle, there was a marked increase in the number of issue-oriented funders whose work on issues such as health care, the environment, and poverty led them to support voter engagement work as an effective way of influencing policy related to their issue. Many funders support the dissemination of targeted publications drawing the connection between key issues and voter engagement work. They also suggested encouraging more of the service organizations usually funded by issue-oriented donors to become active in voter engagement work. One funder said, *"If we involve service organizations, then community and faith-based funders could fund food banks to do voter engagement."*

6 **Improve voter engagement evaluation methods**

Practitioners and funders hold different views on the most effective way to evaluate a voter engagement effort[19] VEEP participants agreed that evaluation of voter engagement work has two main objectives:

• Determine how effectively organizations have registered and mobilized voters

• Assess the extent to which organizations have used their voter engagement efforts to strengthen their capacity and infrastructure for future voter engagement work.

During the 2004 cycle, the quantifiable aspects of voter-engagement work (number of voters registered, turnout rates, etc.) led several funders to seek numerical measures of organizations' performance, and even enabled some grantmakers to allocate their funding based on numeric objectives. However, as the election cycle progressed, many funders found that even the most seemingly quantifiable metric–the number of voters that an organization registered

and turned out to vote–proved difficult to measure. Douglas Rivers and Brian Stults of Polimetrix, a nonpartisan political research organization (based in Palo Alto, California), described the difficulties inherent in tallying voter registrations:

> *"It is…surprisingly difficult to determine with precision how many actual registrations were produced by a group and, of new registrants, how many of a program's nominal registrants voted in the subsequent election. Not all of the applications collected by a program end up on the county or state's list of registered voters. Some applications are invalid and may be rejected (because the applicant is already registered, a noncitizen, or a former felon, because the application is incomplete, because the application was submitted too late or not at all, and any number of other possible reasons). There are other, more mundane reasons we may not find all registrations–even valid ones–on a state's voter list. The records maintained by some voter registration programs do not allow easy identification of their applicants on the county or state list of registered voters. Data entry errors often cause discrepancies that defeat standard 'joins' of two databases (which require exact matches between fields). The processing rules followed by election authorities and registration groups often differ substantially, resulting in significant differences between what the group's records show as being entered on the voter's application and what the county or state registrar entered into its database."*

Furthermore, many organizations felt that some funders' over-emphasis on a program's measurability short-changed other valuable but less quantifiable activities that measure impact. These obstacles—combined with concerns that the focus on numbers of new voters was leading organizations to spend disproportionate resources on registration at the expense of voter education, protection, and mobilization efforts — led several funders to consider qualitative forms of evaluation. Supporters of such qualitative measures argue that many of the most important secondary outcomes of a voter engagement project are difficult, if not impossible, to measure numerically, and they require substantial time and resources to undertake. Among these are leadership development, volunteer recruitment and engagement, relationship building with other organizations, increased institutional capacity for and commitment to future voter engagement work, and the successful integration of nonpartisan electoral work with constituency or issue organizing.

In order to advance effective evaluation that combines numeric measures with accountability for sustainable civic engagement, two interpretive devices were referenced as needing further examination by funders: the gauges used to measure, and the processes undertaken to gather data and conduct measurement.

A. Metrics

Evaluations should be helpful to both the grantmaker and the grantee. They should *not*, funders agreed, place an undue time or resource burden on the grantee organization. According to Kafi Blumenfield of Liberty Vote!, *"Some grantees feel that the size of their grants haven't warranted the extensive funder monitoring that goes into it."* To this end, convening participants had several suggestions:

- **Work with grantees to develop useful evaluation metrics.** By involving grantees in developing performance measures, funders ensure their measures are reasonable and helpful to the grantee, and grantees can be confident that they know exactly the criteria by which they will be evaluated. Frank Sanchez of Needmor Fund put it this way: *"It's more a process of continual feedback from grantees that helps us perfect this type of grantmaking."*

- **Create a database of evaluation criteria.** Such a database would enable funders to learn from the criteria used by other funders in evaluating different aspects of an organization. The criteria could be divided by topic, including organizational development, registration and turnout goals, etc.

- **Develop a standard evaluation template for multiple funders.** This would enable grantees with several voter engagement funders to complete only one evaluation form. The template should take into account different political, demographic, cultural, and social climates in which grantees work.

B. Processes

• Create a pool of funder evaluations. Recognizing that not all funders are able to conduct site visits with every grantee organization and certainly not every year, some funders discussed developing an archive of evaluations of voter engagement organizations.

• Intermediaries. Funders might consider using national, regional, and state-based organizations to assist with evaluations. Intermediaries would provide the capacity to identify, monitor, and evaluate small grantees. Some coalition efforts among field organizations have begun to address the development of accountable voter engagement metrics. It was also suggested that where networks deliver fundraising, technical assistance, and other services to community-based organizations, these networks could be held accountable for advancing the capacities developed by community based organizations using agreed-upon metrics.

A few funders commented that one of the things not undertaken in 2004 was an effort to evaluate coordination among funders. One funder noted that he would need intermediaries less if he had powerful connections with state funders who know the lay of the land. Some suggested a separate means for measuring and thus holding funders accountable for early and robust voter engagement decisions.

7 **Advance the empirical base of knowledge about what works well**

Quantitative measurement of voter engagement work enables the field to empirically determine which voter registration or mobilization tactics work best. Many researchers consider randomized field experiments the gold standard of evaluation, resulting in the most accurate analysis of effectiveness. These types of controlled experiments provide the highest degree of certainty that the results achieved reflect the value of the intervention and not other variables. Meanwhile, a field experiment allows the funder and grantee community to understand how interventions work in the contingent and complex "real world." There are many combinations of medium, technique, timing, message, and target population that can be tested. A series of randomized field experiments was initiated by a small group of funders during the 2004 election cycle, and a few funders are leading an effort to determine the questions that are most critical to advance additional tests in 2006. FCCP will try to make available some of these studies.

CONCLUSION

he 2004 election cycle witnessed innovation, coordination, and nonpartisan voter engagement efforts at an impressive scale. Most of these efforts met or exceeded expectations. The Funders' Committee for Civic Participation will continue to work with funders to improve the effectiveness of voter engagement grantmaking, evaluate ongoing efforts, pilot new approaches, and encourage funders to deepen their commitment to support voter engagement work. The FCCP will continue to share information, identify priority areas for further exploration, and provide a platform for advancing individual and collaborative funding opportunities. By highlighting the accomplishments and lessons of recent voter work, and outlining promising next steps, this report provides a basis for continuing conversations.

Endnotes

1 For the purposes of this report, the term "community-based organization (CBO)" refers to groups that are rooted in a community, regardless of whether they are large or small, single/multi-state operations, issue-focused, etc.

2 For more information on the timing and allocation of voter engagement funding, see Appendix A.

3 Infrastructure challenges range from making sure that new employees get added quickly to a group's payroll and insurance plan, to acquiring new office equipment to accommodate new staff and volunteers.

4 Coordination among funders of voter engagement work is also hugely important; this aspect of coordination is covered in the "Next Steps" section of the report, and referred to here only in passing.

5 The Campaign for Communities coalition was composed of Earth Day Network, NAACP National Voter Fund, Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, and Project Vote/ACORN, and worked primarily with students and communities of color.

6 Some convening participants felt effective funding in minority communities should also prioritize the development of people of color in senior leadership positions within minority organizations.

7 "2004 Election Day Survey. How We Voted: People, Ballots & Polling Places," A Report to the American People by The United States Election Assistance Commission, September 2005.

8 National Association for Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), 2002.

9 "Get Out the Vote! How to Increase Voter Turnout," Donald P. Green and Alan S. Gerber, 2004.

10 "The Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight," commissioned by New California Media, in partnership with Center for American Progress and Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund, June 2005.

11 MacWilliams, Robinson & Partners.

12 Podcast refers to a voice file, posted to a website, that can be downloaded and played on an MP3 player like an iPod.

13 See list of VEEP convening participants in Appendix C.

14 "The State of Our Elections: What Went Right and Wrong in the Administration of the 2004 Elections," Knight Foundation, January 2005.

15 Adam J. Berinsky asserts in his paper, "The Perverse Consequences of Electoral Reform in the US" that "electoral reforms have a greater effect on retention than on stimulation…they exacerbate, rather than ease, existing socioeconomic biases in the composition of the voting public," July 2005.

16 One critical element is accurate data entry up front, which requires well-trained staff and strict quality-control measures. While it is often advisable to outsource data entry, many organizations involved in voter registration balk at the idea of outsourcing the handling of sensitive information about their members/constituents.

17 Many convening participants emphasized the importance of having technical assistance staff permanently on hand – ideally 1-2 staff persons in each of 7-8 geographic regions, reachable by phone – to help database users navigate the system, in order not to limit the database's usefulness and accessibility. Several funders referenced the "60/40" rule of technical assistance regarding list use – that is, 60% of all technical assistance needs result from the user's lack of technical know-how, while 40% result from genuine technical errors, either on the front or back end.

18 In addition to the subsets listed, several funders mentioned the importance of reaching out to family and corporate foundations, as well as individual philanthropists. However, relatively little discussion was devoted to these subsets, and they are not expanded upon here.

19 Many funders are limited to numeric metrics because institutional guidelines prevent them from funding less quantifiable work.

Voter Engagement Evaluation Project (VEEP)

Appendices

Voter Engagement Evaluation Project
Survey of §501(c)(3) Funding During the 2004 Election Cycle
Deena Fidas and Stephanie Firestone, Proteus Fund

Project Summary

National Voice[1] estimates that 2000 organizations conducted §501 (c)(3) voter engagement work nationwide. Proteus Fund survey data collected from §501 (c)(3) funders identified approximately 150 of these organizations that were among the primary recipients of support from this civic participation community.

Between late February and early April, Proteus Fund administered a survey to those field organizations with a predicted §501 (c)(3) budget of $150,000 or more for voter engagement work done during the 2004 election cycle. In total, 30 organizations were contacted with a response rate of 67%. The survey had two primary components: gathering field organizations' §501 (c)(3) budget break-downs for the 2004 election cycle and soliciting feedback on the flow and use of §501 (c)(3) funds through a brief series of open-ended questions.

Purpose and Content of Survey Report

The survey was designed to provide the funder community with a picture of when the field received and expended §501 (c)(3) funds and how these monies were used, as well as feedback from the field regarding the impact of grantmaking practices on their operations during the 2004 election cycle. The summary reporting from this representative sample provides the §501 (c)(3) funding breakdowns by voter engagement activity (Figure 1), programmatic and operational costs (Figure 6), and targeted demographic population (Figure 7). Furthermore, the cash flow charts (Figures 2-5) provide depictions of the monthly receipt and allocation of funding per voter engagement activity. Each set of figures is preceded by open-ended feedback from the field. The final section summarizes the most common responses on grantmaking practices as well as suggestions for the next election cycles.

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1 *During the 2004 election cycle, National Voice was a nonprofit organization committed to helping nonprofit, nonpartisan, and community groups promote voting and other forms of civic engagement.*
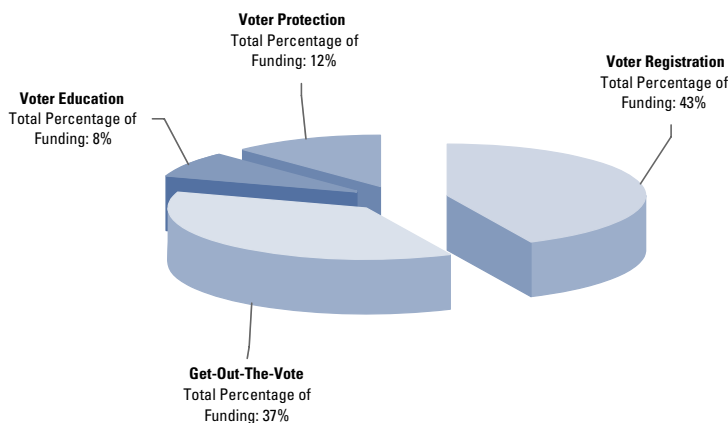
Division of Funding Among Voter Engagement Activities

Voter Engagement activities for the 2004 election cycle fell into four categories: voter registration, get-out-the-vote (GOTV), voter education (activities intended to educate the public about all aspects of the voting process as well as nonpartisan, issue-based education), and voter protection (all pre- and post-Election Day activities intended to ensure voters equal access to the vote and that votes are counted).

In this representative sample, voter registration and GOTV activities were prioritized over both voter education and voter protection; voter registration accounted for 43% of the total §501(c)(3) activities budget, and GOTV outreach accounted for 37%. Voter education and voter protection were funded at 8% and 12% respectively (Figure 1).

In their open-ended remarks, practitioners reported trouble communicating with funders on the importance of diverse voter engagement strategies. They noted the specificity of those grants that supported issue-based voter education, indicating that these would have been more effective with increased flexibility so that organizations could respond to timely, "headline driven" issues such as peace and security. Additionally, community-based organizations serving low-income, people of color observed that funders' emphasis on voter registration was not congruent with some of the field work done in low-income communities of color. In some cases, an organization's target demographic tended to be already registered and needed more organizational contact and GOTV work to get to the polls.

Figure 1: Total Percentages of C-3 Funding For Voter Engagement Activities

Voter Protection
Total Percentage of Funding: 12%

Voter Registration
Total Percentage of Funding: 43%

Voter Education
Total Percentage of Funding: 8%

Get-Out-The-Vote
Total Percentage of Funding: 37%

Timing of Grantmaking

Both the field feedback and the budgetary data indicate that the bulk of §501 (c)(3) funding occurred in the latter six months of the election cycle, with spikes in the immediate one to three months before November 2, 2004 (Figures 2-5).

In addition to general problems of operating a §501 (c)(3) organization with an uncertain cash flow, the late funding resulted in organizational leaders having to fundraise during the pre-election frenzy of August through October, in lieu of networking with other field leaders, managing operations, and working in the field. In addition, late funding resulted in

higher staff and materials costs because organizations could not commit to early contracts or train and develop a large volunteer network.

Please note that survey responses for the cash flow charts were incomplete. Since many organizations undertook little voter education work, only 25% of survey respondents are reflected in the voter education funding graph (Figure 4).

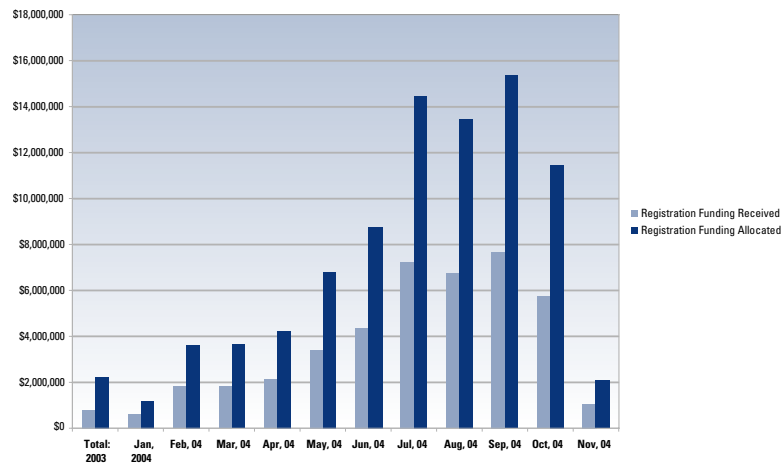**Figure 2: Receipt and Allocation of Voter Registration Funding for the 2004 Election Cycle**

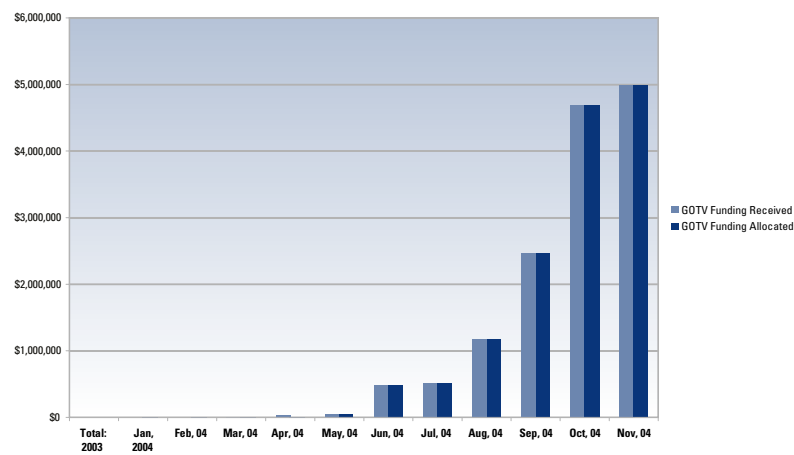**Figure 3: Receipt and Allocation of GOTV Funding for the 2004 Election Cycle**

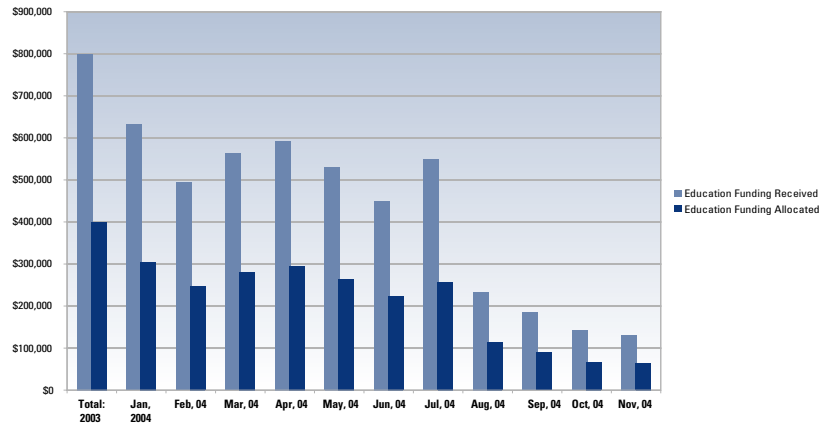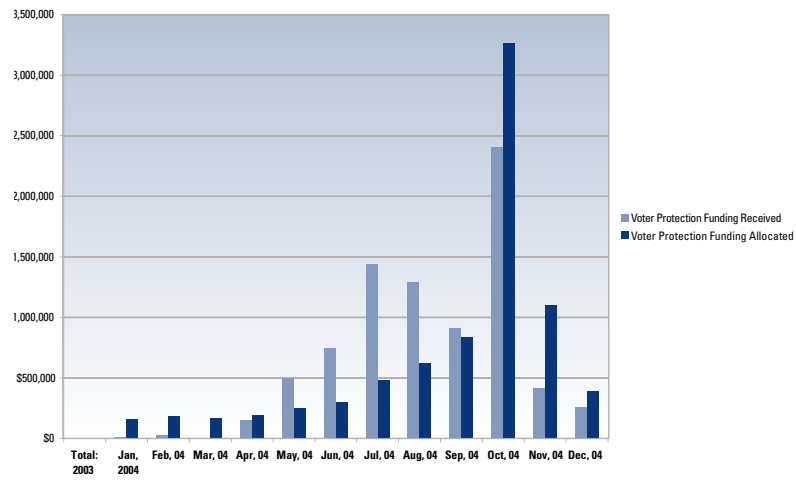**Figure 4: Receipt and Allocation of Education Funding for the 2004 Election Cycle**
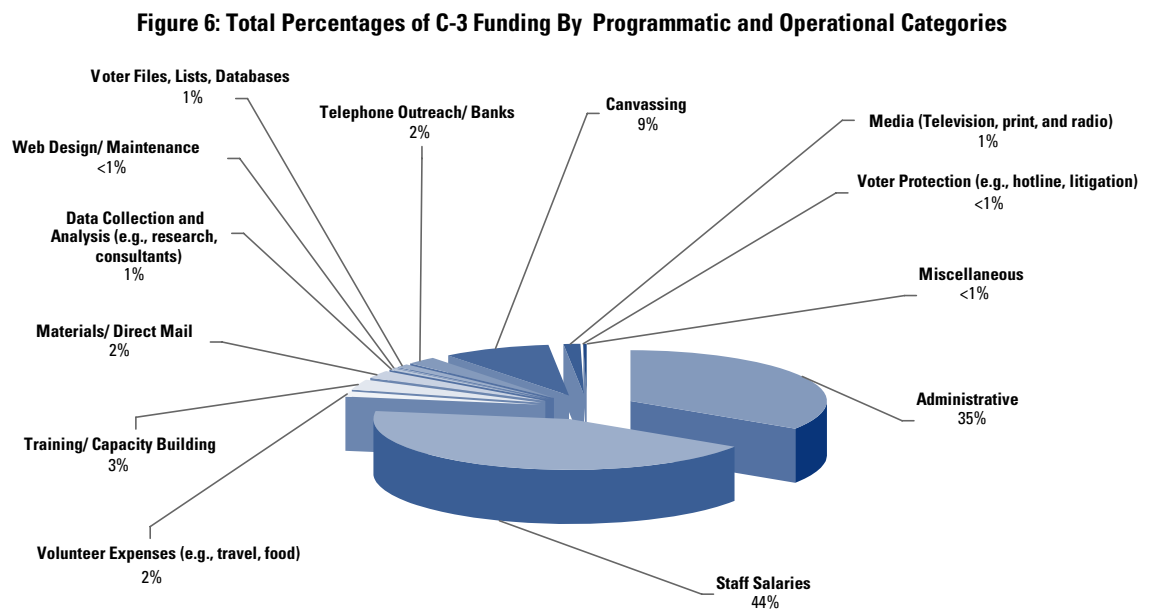

Figure 5: Receipt and Allocation of Voter Protection Funding for the 2004 Election Cycle

Division of Funding By Programmatic and Operational Categories

The categories in Figure 6 reflect the primary programmatic and operational costs of conducting voter engagement work during the election cycle; emerging needs such as web-based resources are also noted.

Some community-based groups indicated that the large expenditures related to registration activities came at the expense of long-term capacity building. Organizations working primarily with non-native English speakers reported that they had limited use of shared general voter-engagement materials because they needed translation; and that general support would have helped them overcome this difficulty.

Figure 6: Total Percentages of C-3 Funding By Programmatic and Operational Categories

Voter Files, Lists, Databases
1%

Telephone Outreach/ Banks
2%

Canvassing
9%

Media (Television, print, and radio)
1%

Web Design/ Maintenance
<1%

Voter Protection (e.g., hotline, litigation)
<1%

Data Collection and Analysis (e.g., research, consultants)
1%

Miscellaneous
<1%

Materials/ Direct Mail
2%

Administrative
35%

Training/ Capacity Building
3%

Volunteer Expenses (e.g., travel, food)
2%

Staff Salaries
44%

Division of Funding Among Demographic Populations

The following pie chart (Figure 7) shows the division of funding among demographic populations in the survey sample. In cases with overlapping demographic groups (e.g., low-income immigrant communities), the organization's first priority group was recorded.

Figure 7: Total Percentages of c-3 Funding Per Target Demographic Population
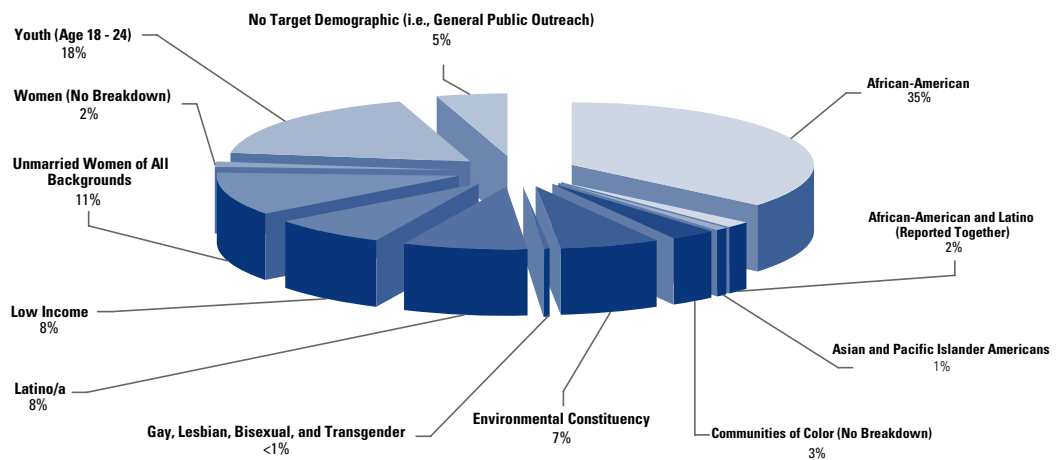
Open-ended Questions: Reflections on Grantmaking Practices Over the 2004 Election Cycle

Worked Well

I. Organizations with larger operations across the country tended to benefit from and praise grantmaking practices over the 2004 election cycle.

II. Some field organizations noted that quantitative accountability measures and standards for grantmaking did increase the rigor of their voter registration work.

Room for Improvement

I. "If you can't count it…" While quantitative accountability standards worked well to increase voter registration efforts, they resulted in less funding for community-based groups that either could not produce the level of results needed to secure funding or were focused on voter mobilization, education, and protection efforts. Some community-based groups also reported that they had to prioritize their primary work (GOTV, voter education, and voter protection) behind registration to secure funding.

II. Funders did provide significant support to community-based organizations, but could increase attention to the specific requirements of community-based work in ethnic and immigrant communities (e.g., the need for bilingual staff, translated materials).

III. Grantmaking in the latter six months of the election year funded successful voter engagement programs, but the field noted that earlier and multi-year funding would allow for substantially more effective voter engagement programs and sustain the long-term work for civic participation.

Recommendations for Future Work

I. Develop a complementary quantitative and qualitative method of assessing a program's efficacy so that both immediate election goals of voting as well as long-term goals of civic engagement are reflected.

II. Develop grantmaking strategies and/or increase general support to consider linguistic and cultural diversity amongst ethnic and immigrant populations (money needed for bilingual staff, culture-based training, staff development for pan-cultural coalition building, and materials). Also, increase grantmaking strategies that take into account the responsiveness of traditionally underrepresented groups to field workers who are familiar with a population's culture, native tongue, and specific local needs of the community to increase voter turnout.

III. Increase year-round, non-partisan, issue-based voter education with the implication that those issues affecting a community intersect with the need to vote and be an active citizen.

VEEP Research Papers and Authors

TOP TEN LESSONS FOR FUNDERS
Heather Booth & Stephanie Firestone, Proteus Fund

SURVEY OF §501(c)(3) FUNDING DURING THE 2004 ELECTION CYCLE
Deena Fidas & Stephanie Firestone, Proteus Fund

NATIONAL VOTER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONS
A Review of Voter Engagement Work by Nine National Field Organizations, *Carin Schiewe, Consultant*
Mobilizing Voters From Historically Underrepresented Communities:
   A Comparison of Voter Turnout in 2000 and 2004, *Deena Fidas*
Spotlight on Two Demographic Groups: Youth and Unmarried Women, *Carin Schiewe, Consultant*
Breakdown of turnout among youth, *Peter Levine, Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning Engagement*
   (CIRCLE). University of Maryland
Breakdown of turnout among unmarried women, *Women's Voices. Women Vote.*

STATE AND LOCAL VOTER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONS
Qualitative Assessment of Voter Engagement Work by §501(c)(3) Organizations During the 2004
   Election Cycle, *Teresa Purcell, Purcell Public Affairs*
Evaluation of Voter Registration Programs, *Douglas Rivers and Brian Stults, Polimetrix*
Report on Thirteen GOTV Randomized Field Experiments *Peter Levine, CIRCLE, University of Maryland*

COORDINATION
State Coordination of §501(c)(3) Voter Engagement Work, *Chuck Shuford & Marc Caplan, Proteus Fund*
National Coordination: National Voice Evaluation, *Caron Atlas (introduction by Mark Ritchie)*

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TECHNOLOGY
Survey of Technical Assistance Efforts Supporting Nonprofit Voter Engagement
   Kafi Bumenfield, Liberty Hill Foundation
Overview of web-based technology in the 2004 Elections, *Allison Fine, E-Volve Foundation*

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Page Gardner, *Women's Voices. Women Vote.*

Irma González, *Proteus Fund*

Lisa Guide, *Rockefeller Family Fund*

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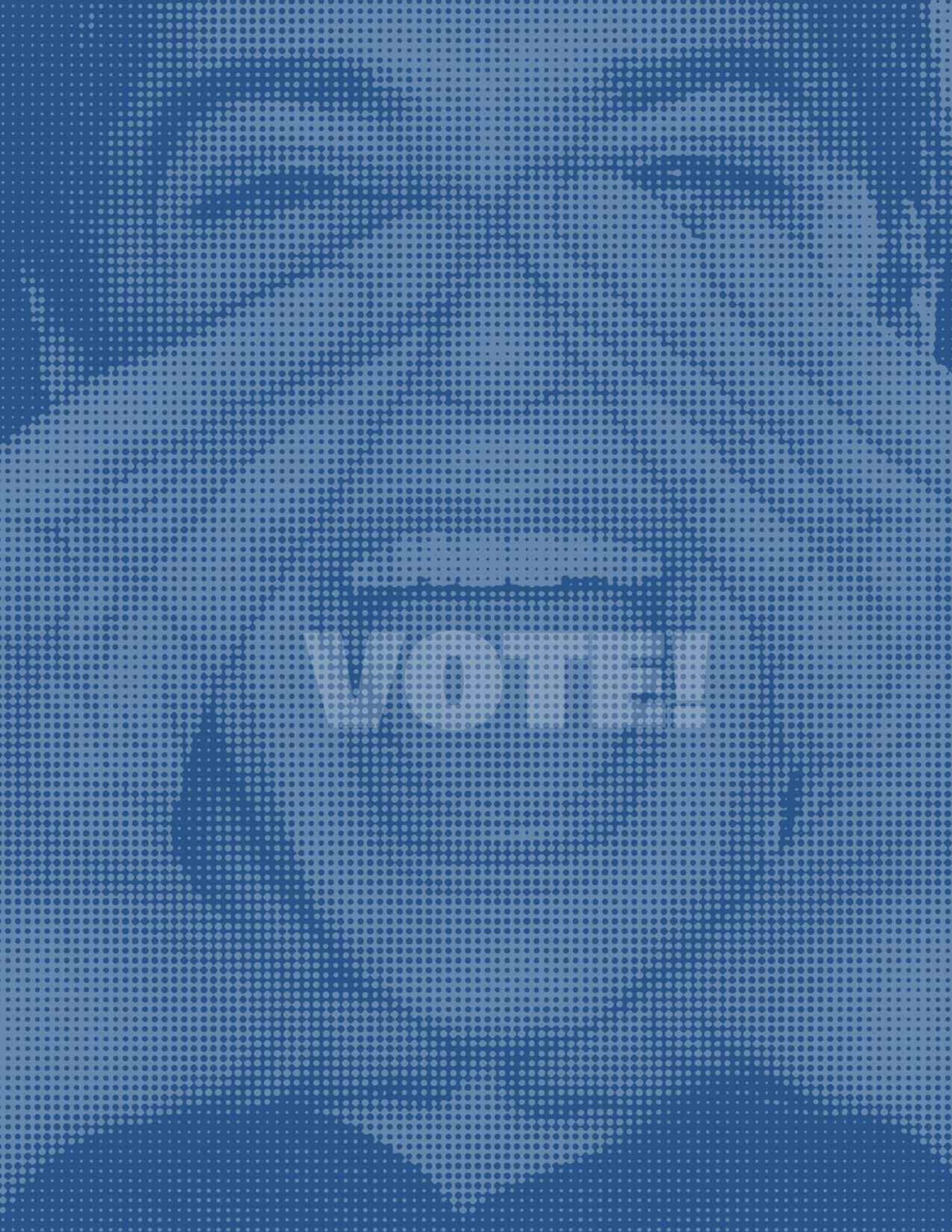
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