

# INNOVATIONS IN VOTER EDUCATION

Companion Brief for Funders

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October 2025



*A collaboration sponsored by the following partners:*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late 2023, Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) and Yolo Community Foundation (YCF) partnered with the San Mateo and Yolo County elections offices to educate voters about new voting practices under the [California Voter's Choice Act](#). Harnessing county and private philanthropic funding, the community foundations made short-term grants to community-based organizations and helped them coordinate strategies to reach voters.



Image credit: Youth Community Service

In short, **the community grants programs worked**. Stewarding minimal investment, funders engaged diverse community groups that helped counties educate a significant number voters, particularly among under-represented communities. **Grantees' culturally competent approaches clearly connected with voters, demonstrating that community-based outreach is an efficient and effective model that deserves replication.**

This brief describes this ready-to-use model and offers recommendations for philanthropic funders interested in supporting similar approaches. A second companion guide with recommendations for election officials can be accessed [here](#).

For a **full analysis** of the grantmaking programs—including details about their structure and implementation, the role of county elections offices, grantee activities, key impacts, and challenges—please see [\*INNOVATIONS IN VOTER EDUCATION: How Philanthropy Joined with San Mateo and Yolo Counties to Support Local Nonprofits and Ramp Up Election Outreach\*](#).

# PROJECT SUMMARY

The grant programs supported voter education and engagement in advance of both the 2024 primary and general elections. In San Mateo and Yolo Counties, election officials designated funding to be granted to nonprofit organizations serving their communities. The Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund (Haas Jr.) provided additional funding in both counties, and SVCf contributed funds to support the San Mateo County effort. While election officials provided monetary resources, information about voting processes, and assistance upon request, the respective grants programs were fully administered by SVCf and YCF. Grantees—including direct service providers, media producers, and civic engagement organizations—used grants ranging from \$3,500 to \$22,362 apiece to produce and distribute voter education materials, engage voters at community events, and conduct direct voter contact. The Yolo County program, first piloted in 2024, built upon the San Mateo County effort, which first launched in 2020.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Over \$529,000 in grants** were awarded across both counties.
- **28 community organizations participated:** 19 in San Mateo County and 9 in Yolo County.
- **Voter outreach prioritized equity and inclusion**, primarily reaching youth, non-English speakers, under-represented communities of color, and people facing food insecurity.
- Grantees **contacted more than 135,000 individuals** through canvassing, phone banking, outreach activities, and written communications.
- Grantees created unique content and generated at least **200,000 targeted media impressions**.

## KEY OUTCOMES

- **Grantees reached large volumes of voters**, primarily from communities with low voter turnout rates.
- The grants programs contributed to **higher-than-expected voter participation** in targeted communities.
- Through positive personal interactions, event attendance, and social media engagement, **voters demonstrated interest** in grantees' efforts.
- Grantee strategies and materials **added value to the counties' outreach efforts**, due to the grantees' cultural competence, relationships, and creativity.
- The administering **foundations established new relationships** with grantee organizations, diversifying their connections in the community and helping to sustain local nonprofit networks.
- The foundations strengthened ties with elections offices and **laid groundwork for future collaborations with county agencies**.
- **The foundations deepened their knowledge of elections** and expanded their capacity to support civic engagement.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHILANTHROPY

- Explore opportunities to **advance this model in additional California communities**—for example, by meeting with local election officials to share the model and by offering to administer grants on behalf of local elections offices.
- Help interested counties **identify philanthropic, public, and private resources** to support this work.
- When administering a voter education grants program, ensure that funding is allocated and grants are approved **at least three to four months before an election**.
- Consider how to encourage **more intentional collaboration and joint planning** among grantees as a way to ensure more efficient campaigns that reach a greater number of voters.
- **Provide clear guidance** to grantees and streamlined approval of materials in order to reduce confusion and delays.
- **Support grantees** in non-monetary ways by providing guidance and contacts; promoting their work; and simplifying reporting requirements.
- Explore opportunities to **sustain and scale this model for supporting voter education and outreach statewide**.

## CONCLUSION

The innovative funding programs in San Mateo and Yolo counties demonstrate that partnerships among counties, foundations, and community-based organizations can **effectively enhance equitable voter participation while efficiently using public resources**. The programs also highlight the importance of culturally relevant, trusted messengers in effective civic engagement. By supporting voter education grants programs, **philanthropy can play a critical role** in building a healthier democracy and thriving communities.



Image credit: Casa Circulo Cultural & Peninsula 360 Press

# WHY FUNDERS SHOULD SUPPORT LOCAL VOTER EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

## Grants programs benefit the entire community

- **The San Mateo and Yolo County grants programs were effective;** voter turnout increased and voters were engaged in grantees' outreach efforts.
- Voter education grants programs can **build power for underrepresented communities.** With an expanded voter base, **public policies are more likely to reflect the perspectives of marginalized communities.**
- Participating in voter education programs provides valuable opportunities for community members to hone their leadership skills and build their networks, potentially **expanding and diversifying the pipeline of future civic leaders.**
- Political and partisan **get-out-the-vote campaigns tend to focus on higher-propensity voters.**<sup>1</sup> Philanthropy plays an important role in ensuring that new and low-propensity voters are engaged in elections and informed about how to participate.
- **Philanthropic funding for civic engagement and democracy is very limited in California,** and few organizations are funded to educate and engage voters. Most national funders direct their democracy grants to organizations in other states.
- A community grants program **can strengthen the local nonprofit infrastructure** by providing much-needed funding, cultivating relationships among diverse community leaders, and affirming organizations as valuable contributors. Grantees report that participating in the program raised their standing in the community and inspired meaningful engagement and appreciation from their stakeholders.
- Organizations rooted in community are more likely to reach residents effectively. According to Carolina Valverde, YCF's Program Manager, "Whether the barrier is language, transportation, mobility, or work schedules, our **local nonprofits are tapped into their communities and know the best strategies to engage those they serve.**"

"A strong and thriving community—which is the ultimate goal for most philanthropy—is a place where all community members have a voice."

Jessica Hubbard  
Yolo Community Foundation

<sup>1</sup> Shellenberger, L. & Romero, M. (2023). The Voter's Choice Act: Impact Analysis and Recommendations. [https://selc.senate.ca.gov/sites/selc.senate.ca.gov/files/VCA\\_Impact\\_Report\\_October\\_2023.pdf](https://selc.senate.ca.gov/sites/selc.senate.ca.gov/files/VCA_Impact_Report_October_2023.pdf).

## Funders can deepen their networks and advance strategic goals

- The voter outreach programs in both counties were supported by a combination of public sector and philanthropic funding. Community grants programs can enable funders to **leverage their resources by inspiring others to invest**. Raúl Macías, Democracy Program Director at the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund says, “Being able to make a grant that would inspire the county to match was a very compelling opportunity.”
- Educating diverse residents via clusters of small grants to community-based organizations is **efficient, effective, and replicable; the model is a philanthropic best practice**. YCF's Executive Director, Jessica Hubbard, reflects that “after doing a couple of these ‘nonprofits as trusted messenger’ grants, we’ve realized we’ve developed a strong process and a network that can be deployed to deliver a wide range of messages to a wide range of local communities.”
- Voter education grants programs help foundations **deepen relationships with existing grantees and surface new grantee relationships**. Jack Mahoney, Senior Director of Community Action at SVCF, considers the grants program “a great way to identify organizations that we don’t typically engage with and that aren’t on our radar.” For example, SVCF is now considering how it can work more closely with a new grantee that far exceeded expectations of the voter education program.
- **Grantees developed highly favorable opinions of the foundations** that administered the grant program. They describe the grant programs as easy and accessible and were especially appreciative of funder efforts to simplify reporting. One 2024 grantee said, “Instead of us trying to please the funder, they are trying to make it easier for us.”
- Funders also **strengthened their connections with county officials, identified shared goals, and sharpened their philanthropic strategies**. Mahoney says, “We have learned a lot about the election office’s model, how they think about engagement, and how they present to their leadership. It’s important for the us to understand the challenges the county is operating under and the ways in which partnerships can expand their impact.”
- The grants model **could lead to partnerships with other county agencies** or bolster foundations’ applications for future government contracts. Hubbard says, “It’s helpful that I can refer another county office to the elections office and say we have a template for how we’ve done this.”
- Administering a county-sponsored grants program can **help build staff skills and knowledge**, particularly about government processes, civic engagement, and community demographics. For smaller philanthropic organizations, the management fees gained from administering such programs may represent a meaningful **new revenue source**.
- Leading a high-profile project with key community leaders can **elevate the reputation of a foundation**, expand its name recognition, and affirm the foundation’s role as a connected and critical community resource.

“Working with the elections office was a great way to identify organizations that we don’t typically engage with and that aren’t on our radar.”

Jack Mahoney  
Silicon Valley Community Foundation



Image credit: Youth Community Service

# MAKING IT WORK: 11 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS

## ONE: Learn more about the San Mateo and Yolo County grants programs and the role of the funders

- The 2024 grants programs in San Mateo and Yolo Counties included **three key partners**:
  - The **elections offices**, which funded the programs and provided critical information about the election, voting processes, and the electorate.
  - The **grantees** who engaged their networks and applied their expertise to connect with voters.
  - The **partner foundations** (also referred to as “the administering foundations” and “the funders”) who administered the grants programs and coordinated grantees.
- **Each partner foundation assumed the following responsibilities**:
  - Administering grants, including soliciting and reviewing applications, preparing grant agreements, and issuing checks.
  - Identifying a diverse cohort of grantees that aligned with the programs' goals.
  - Training grantees to participate in the program.
  - Encouraging coordination as grantees developed and implemented their strategies.
  - Reporting collective and individual outcomes to their county.
- Additionally, the partner foundations **coordinated funding from other sources** and, in the case of Silicon Valley Community Foundation, provided funding from its own coffers.
- **Learn more about the San Mateo and Yolo County projects** by reading our [full report](#) detailing those efforts. For additional study, consider reviewing a similar program in [King County, Washington](#), supported by the Seattle Foundation.



Image credit: Youth Community Service

## TWO: Partner with a county to establish a grants program

- In San Mateo and Yolo counties, the **elections offices initiated their respective grants programs** and approached their local community foundations for help administering them. One county considered partnering with a local nonprofit to administer its grants program, but ultimately found the project better suited to a community foundation with grantmaking experience.
- As an alternative approach, a foundation or other community group might consider **initiating a voter outreach grants program and requesting participation and cooperation from a county elections office**. In that case, it might be helpful to review our brief with advice for county election administrators. Foundations should be prepared to help the county secure funds for this work, potentially from the county's board of supervisors or local philanthropic donors.
- As a first step, the elections office and partner foundation must **set a budget for the grants program**. The foundation might be in a position to contribute its own funding or solicit supplemental funds from philanthropic partners.
  - The budget should **include funding for the foundation to administer the grants program**. In 2024, administrative fees represented 8.1% of the total budget in San Mateo County and 9.3% of the Yolo County budget.
  - Individual grant amounts and additional **budget details for the 2024 grants are provided in our full report**. Grantees in the two counties reported that individual grant amounts were generally satisfactory, though they might need to be increased in future cycles if grant periods are lengthened.
- The county and funder should work together to **establish the goals of the grants program**, including identifying the outcomes the county hopes to achieve.
- **Identify which communities grantees should prioritize** with their outreach. Consider various demographic communities that could benefit from expansive voter education, such as neighborhoods with a low turnout record, voters of a certain age, specific language populations, and other groups that might be challenging for county officials to reach. In addition to establishing clear targets, **brainstorm the names of organizations and community leaders with experience reaching those populations**.
- The elections office and funder should **sign a grant agreement that outlines the core responsibilities of each partner**, as well as a **schedule for meeting key benchmarks**.
- Be sure to **establish clear lines of communication** between the county and foundation, including identifying specific contacts, their roles, and expected follow-up times.

## THREE: Build in as much up-front time as possible for planning and coordination

- Though their efforts were largely successful, **the biggest challenge grantees experienced was needing more time** to develop their strategies and materials before the voting period started.
- Before the prime voter outreach period begins—two months before Election Day—**grantees need time to:** plan their strategies and activities; coordinate with other grantees; develop, translate, and get approval of materials; and hire staff, recruit volunteers, and conduct training.
- The following recommended timeline reflects extensive feedback from grantees and other participants in the 2024 grantmaking program. Most importantly, **grantees recommend approving grants four months before each election**.

## TIMELINE

### Recommended timeline for administering a community grants program

Months correspond to a March primary cycle for a Presidential election year;  
adjust timeline forward three months for a June primary



- It is critical that voter education materials are ready by the time outreach starts. **If you are funding an organization or vendor to create materials for other grantees, provide them with an earlier grant** so they can have at least an initial round of materials completed and available by the start of the voter outreach period.
- **Build in time for activities grantees might not anticipate or control**, such as sourcing translations from community members and seeking approvals from county officials. Additionally, some popular media platforms, such as Facebook, may require longer review times for what they deem to be political ads.
- Be sure to **get clarity from the county on all relevant dates** such as when the voting period starts and when the locations of vote centers and ballot drop boxes will be available. **Provide grantees with a thorough timeline.**

#### FOUR: Establish a simple proposal process that specifies project goals and targeted populations for voter education and outreach

- The partner foundation should propose for the county's approval **criteria for selecting grantees, proposal guidelines, and a recommended approval process**. Prepare to make the guidelines available to potential applicants at least four weeks before proposals are due.
- **Keep the proposal guidelines as simple as possible**, considering that these are likely to be small, short-term grants. Grantees had favorable impressions of the guidelines developed by [Silicon Valley Community Foundation](#) and [Yolo Community Foundation](#).
- **Establish a process for evaluating proposals and selecting grantees**, possibly including a scoring rubric and guide. YCF assembled a selection committee whose members brought demographic and geographic diversity as well as a range of relevant expertise, including in elections administration, communications, and philanthropy.



Image credit: Casa Circulo Cultural & Peninsula 360 Press

#### FIVE: Aim for a diverse portfolio of grantees with varied capacities and networks for reaching the project's target populations

- When recruiting your applicant pool, **consider which organizations have strong networks in your priority populations and capacity to reach** those populations, such as frequent personal interactions or established media programs. **Reach out to those organizations directly and encourage them to apply.**
- Additionally, **make the proposal guidelines publicly available** and partner with the county elections office to advertise the opportunity. SVCF's Jack Mahoney appreciates that the San Mateo County elections office helped the foundation "get the word out and reach smaller CBOs we didn't know," including at least one highly effective grantee the foundation has since supported in other ways.
- Encourage proposals from **organizations that might not have an existing relationship with your foundation**, both to diversify the pool of prospective grantees and to boost your foundation's potential to learn and establish new relationships.
- In addition to smaller organizations that might bring new ideas and approaches, **recruit experienced nonprofits with a track record of conducting voter outreach and education**. These might include civic engagement specialists, direct service organizations, media outlets, or colleges. Yolo Chief Elections Officer Jesse Salinas advises, "Don't start from scratch. There's such a limited window of time for this work that it's helpful to have organizations with experience who can scale up quickly."
- **Assemble a diverse cohort of grantees who, collectively, can reach all target populations**. YCF's Hubbard says funders should "use a portfolio approach." She added, "Not all grantees need to cover every geographic or demographic target, but there should be coverage across the range of grantees."
- Try to ensure that the full grantee cohort's proposed activities **incorporate all languages the elections office is legally required to cover in its voter outreach**. If any languages that require coverage are missing from the potential grantee cohort, try to recruit additional applicants or offer extra support to a grantee who can expand their language offerings.
- **Consider allowing grantees to apply for a single grant covering both the primary and general election**. If that isn't possible encourage grantees to apply for grants in both the primary and general election cycles—and ideally over multiple years. Voters are more likely to respond to consistent, repeated messages from familiar sources. Additionally, organizations with experience in one election can build on their prior activities and enhance their effectiveness in subsequent elections.

## SIX: Maximize grantees' freedom to design their own projects

- Give grantees the autonomy to design their own work plans. YCF's Hubbard says, **"Grantees know best which activities will work in their communities** and their own capacity to provide them."
- Projects that build on **existing events and work streams are more efficient and more likely to be successful.**
- While grantees appreciated the flexibility to determine their own activities, some also recommended that the funders **provide limited, optional guidance** such as a list of suggested activities. For example, participants offered the following tips for grantees to consider in future cycles:
  - Consider allocating a portion of the project budget to collaborating with other grantees and participating in training activities.
  - Don't expect to be able to conduct outreach in county jails without longer-term advocacy or relationship building.
  - Voters respond well to targeted, individual outreach and door-to-door canvassing. Canvassing in new construction areas can be especially valuable.
  - The general public does not respond well to random outreach, such as in front of grocery stores.
- **If grants from a foundation place any restrictions on voter registration, clarify what grantees can and cannot do.** While community foundations and public dollars may support voter registration activities, private foundations are restricted from sponsoring registration drives unless the foundation meets certain conditions like funding registration in at least five states.<sup>2</sup> This restriction does not necessarily preclude grantees from conducting voter registration, although funding should not be earmarked for that purpose if it comes from a private foundation that faces such restrictions. Make sure to consult with all funders about their preferred approach and how they might recommend advising grantees.
- If any restrictions on voter registration are required, **funders can consider alternative ways to support voter registration activities.** For example, when SVCF allocated grants in San Mateo County, staff directed funding from Haas Jr., a private foundation, to organizations not planning to conduct voter registration. SVCF ensured that organizations planning to register voters only received funds from the county and the community foundation.

## SEVEN: Support engaging and creative content

- **Encourage grantees to design creative materials that reflect their communities** and the interests of targeted voters. For example, in San Mateo County, the bilingual, multimedia civic engagement organization, Peninsula 360 Press, posted a series of videos featuring its charming puppet newscaster who educated viewers in Spanish about voting. Featuring a locally-known messenger whose average monthly viewership across four social media platforms exceeds 100,000, the campaign was entertaining, informative, and undoubtedly effective.
- Other grantees developed **engaging social media content** with community members describing why they vote or explaining democratic principles while performing viral dance moves.



Image credit: Peninsula 360 Press

<sup>2</sup> Bolder Advocacy. (2018). Voter Registration Rules for Private Foundations. Alliance for Justice. [https://afj.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/06/Voter\\_Registration\\_Rules\\_for\\_Private\\_Foundations-2.pdf](https://afj.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/06/Voter_Registration_Rules_for_Private_Foundations-2.pdf).

- **Traditional media was also effective**, including radio and video public service announcements that received very heavy engagement, **especially when designed for specific language communities**.
- Ensure that grantees have **access to a media tool kit with a variety of assets** such as door hangers, flyers, posters, stickers, and postcards. The kit might include official materials from the county elections office and other items designed by grantees. Ideally, the materials would be available in multiple languages and adaptable so that grantees can add their own logos.
- Before releasing the toolkit, be sure that your foundation or a trusted grantee organization **vets all shared materials** to ensure they contain factually accurate information about voting and, ideally, tested and recommended messages.
- **Consider supporting one organization to create materials on behalf of other grantees.** Engaging a trusted partner with sophisticated communications capacity and knowledge of elections and voting to produce voter education materials can benefit the entire cohort, especially smaller-budget organizations. The partner might be a member of the grantee cohort or a paid consultant.
- **Expect the materials design process to start four months before election day.** Anticipate 6-8 weeks at a minimum for messaging, content development, translations, approval, and printing. Grantees will need to access to materials at least two months before Election Day.
- Be mindful to **avoid potential challenges** such as requiring bulk print orders that could get delayed by late requests or deciding to delay printing until all voting locations are confirmed. The Thrive Alliance of Nonprofits (Thrive Alliance) had success providing San Mateo County grantees with digital materials that each organization could print on demand.
- **Ensure grantees have funding for outreach materials**, such as a budget to print shared materials and, if desired, generate their own content. YCF experimented with a printing credit with mixed results. Please see our [full report](#) for additional discussion of the printing credit.



Image credit: Casa Circulo Cultural & Peninsula 360 Press

## EIGHT: Promote collaboration and joint planning

- **Host an introductory session for grantees** in order to explain the program, establish norms and rules, and introduce tools and resources. The county elections office should participate both to share information and reinforce its interest in partnering with grantees.
- Coordinate with the elections office to **invite grantees to serve on the county's language and accessibility advisory committees**, which are required for counties participating in the California Voter's Choice Act.
- Create opportunities to **engage with grantees during the grant period**, both to monitor the project and offer support as needed. In San Mateo County, grantees appreciated the virtual office hours SVCF offered, which provided space to connect with other grantees and troubleshoot challenges. Grantees in both counties also liked when foundation and county staff attended their events and meetings.

- **Encourage grantees to conduct at least one early planning session** to accomplish the following:
  - **Seed relationships** and possible collaboration among grantees.
  - Identify their planned activities and targeted communities to **avoid duplication of efforts and find opportunities for partnership**.
  - **Determine which types of shared materials** organizations will prioritize and in which languages.
  - **Identify other preferences** of participating organizations. For example, in San Mateo County, grantees prioritized receiving voter outreach materials early over having materials that listed voting locations. As a result, Thrive Alliance created digital and print materials with QR codes for dynamic information like voting locations.
- Encourage grantees to **conduct a formal mapping exercise or create a shared activity** list to understand how their work might overlap with or complement that of others. At a minimum, grantees should map which communities they plan to target and what activities they are planning. This should allow grantees to reflect together, coordinate their plans, and make adjustments.
- Alternatively, the **funder could provide the full grantee cohort with an outline of intended target communities and activities** based on grant proposals.
- Grantees could **continue to share their activities and coordinate throughout the grant period** using shared documents or a shared canvassing app, although neither option saw notable uptake during the 2024 effort.

## NINE: Assist grantees with cohort-wide supports and promotion

- Consider providing centralized administrative supports such as **access to a payroll service or tools and advice for managing seasonal employees**. One grantee recommended, “Managing paid associates is tricky for any nonprofit. Could the funders advise on how to do this or provide a clearinghouse for supporting part-time employees with insurance and workers’ comp?”
- Other centralized supports a funder could offer include **shared technology to measure engagement**, such as a website through which each organization’s web links would route. One grantee recommended that funders secure access to a shared account providing free or low-cost online ads for nonprofits (such as Google ads), which could benefit organizations that are too small to qualify for their own accounts.
- Grantees would appreciate access to the full voter list disaggregated by demographic data, if possible. As most counties are not equipped to provide demographic data for their voter rolls, grantees would likely need access to privately purchased data. Funders might want to **explore purchasing voter lists to share with the full grantee cohort** or providing a grantee with funding to do so.
- **Amplify grantees’ activities in order to validate their work** and expose them to potential funders and partners. For example, a foundation could help curate a narrative about the grantee cohort’s work, produce digital media posts recognizing grantee activities, or even provide a photographer to capture grantee events.
- Grantees, especially those that don’t typically conduct voter education, could benefit from **general voter outreach advice like best practices**, suggested vendors and apps, and templates. One grantee suggested the administering foundation provide learning resources for grantees.



Image credit: Youth Community Service

- Grantees encouraged foundations **to recommend organizations that could make good partners and provide contacts**. Consider pairing grantees with one or more “buddy organizations” to support each other during the grant period.
- Consider **convening former and prospective grantees from multiple counties** to share best practices and discuss challenges.

## TEN: Establish a simple reporting process that minimizes the burden on grantees and maximizes learning

- **One of the foundation’s most critical roles is helping to collect the data counties need** to evaluate and refine their outreach and potentially make the case for future funding.
- **Key data points include:**
  - The number of voters or households grantees contacted, disaggregated by the type of contact (i.e., door-to-door, phone conversation, email blast, etc.).
  - The number of people who interacted with grantees at community events.
  - The number of written materials grantees distributed, and in which communities.
  - Media impressions and viewer engagement.
- **Consult with election officials** to learn what other information they might want grantees to collect during their canvassing.
  - This could include updated voter addresses, preferred languages, or other **data that support accurate and accessible election administration**.
  - Counties might be interested in **having grantees ask voters research-oriented questions**, for example, whether election materials are easy to understand and whether voters feel confident about their available voting options.
  - Election officials also might welcome grantees to **recruit community members for the language and accessibility advisory committees** mandated for Voter’s Choice Act counties.
- Share with counties the creative outreach materials grantees produce to educate voters. **Including samples of these materials in reports** would allow county election staff to learn from and potentially adapt them in future election cycles.
- **Reporting processes should be simple and minimize grantee time commitment**, especially during the busy weeks prior to an election. San Mateo County grantees participating in the 2024 general election cohort strongly preferred reporting twice—once in the middle of the grant period and once after Election Day—over the once every other week reporting that was required of 2024 primary election grantees.
- **Consider allowing oral reports**, at least for reporting major learnings, accomplishments, and challenges. For the 2024 general election cycle, SVCF hosted joint reporting meetings with three to four grantees each, with the foundation preparing a written summary on behalf of grantees to submit to the elections office. Grantees responded positively to this approach both because the process was easy, and because it provided the opportunity to learn from peers.



Image credit: Youth Community Service

- YCF appreciated the ease that oral reporting provided for its grantees in the 2024 primary election cycle. Yet, YCF also found benefits to requiring grantees to submit written reports after the general election, given the lengthy lists of activities and quantitative data the foundation wanted to report to the county. YCF's Hubbard speculated that **a hybrid approach of joint oral reporting of key themes, combined with grantee submission of written lists of activities and accomplishments, might be ideal.**



Image credit: Youth Community Service

## ELEVEN: Consider supporting grantees to track their activities through an app

- Though it can be more time-intensive, the elections office in Yolo County saw benefits to **collecting reporting data through two apps it developed** in 2024. The apps enabled grantees to track canvassing efforts and report data on other outreach activities such as community events and media campaigns.
- The Yolo County apps **enabled grantees to record their own progress**, ensure they were on track to meet ambitious goals in a short timeframe, and identify potential **opportunities for greater impact**, such as focusing on a targeted neighborhood that had not been canvassed by any grantees.
- The canvassing-focused app also **provided grantees with valuable information straight from the county's voter file**, including identifying which households included registered voters and which voting precincts had low turnout in prior election cycles.
- Foundations can use real-time app data to **monitor grantee activity** and identify areas where strategic shifts or more support might be needed.
- Recognizing that using apps can be time-consuming, funders should **specify any expectations around apps in application materials and grant agreements**. This ensures that grantees are prepared to participate in training, use the app throughout the grant period, and potentially adjust strategies based on the data the grantee cohort supplies.
- The Yolo County elections office can make its ESRI/GSI-based apps available to other counties wishing to conduct similar outreach. For **additional information on the apps Yolo County developed**, please see our [companion brief for election administrators](#). You may also contact app designer, Mary Ellen Rosebrough, at (530) 406-5004.

# FINAL NOTE



Image credit: Youth Community Service

Small, well-structured voter education grants can significantly boost outreach and turnout in underrepresented communities, thereby building political power and lasting civic infrastructure. Philanthropic funders play a critical role in the success of these programs. Funders are encouraged to advance and participate in the model pioneered in San Mateo and Yolo counties, partnering with counties, investing early, and empowering community-based organizations to assure that everyone has a voice in local elections.