The United States has a long history of denying voting rights to its citizens, including people of color, women and young people. While we have seen gains in voting rights and access in recent decades, we also have witnessed the resurgence of efforts to deny voting rights through state actions such as purging voter rolls, restricting voting rights of returning citizens, instituting onerous voter ID laws, limiting access to voting by mail, and other measures. In upcoming elections, the coronavirus pandemic will have a disproportionate impact on democratic participation for communities of color who have been affected most deeply by the health crisis and who will encounter greater barriers to voter participation given the new risks of voting in person on Election Day.

Securing full access to voting and robust voter participation requires a multi-pronged approach entailing voter mobilization, voter protection, enacting fair election laws, and litigation. Such efforts intersect with one another, as policies that ensure fair election systems can encourage greater participation; at the same time, voter engagement across communities can help surface remaining barriers to full participation as well as inform litigation efforts.

Throughout the South, numerous organizations deeply rooted in their communities have been working to promote voter registration and participation to ensure that everyone’s voice is heard and perspective counted in our democracy. Many groups struggle to secure the resources they need to conduct outreach and are also facing new challenges in reaching their constituencies in a new era of social distancing and mostly digital communications.

The Vote Your Voice Initiative will support organizations in five Southern states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi) to conduct voter registration, education and mobilization activities among voters of color, particularly those facing significant barriers to participation, such as returning citizens, young people, those who have been purged from voter rolls, and infrequent voters generally not contacted by the major outreach organizations. The initiative is working with BlueLabs to partner with funded organizations in tracking their progress, gauging their impact, and identifying the most effective outreach strategies. The initiative also includes other technical assistance resources to support the funded organizations.
The Vote Your Voice Initiative is sponsored by Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which is dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and to seeking justice for the victims of discrimination, exploitation, and oppression. The initiative’s fund is hosted at the Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta, which has served the 23-county Atlanta region for nearly 70 years, inspiring philanthropy to increase the vitality of the region and the well-being of all residents. The initiative is managed jointly by SPLC and the Community Foundation.

**Funded Activities and Priority Populations**

As stated above, the Vote Your Voice Initiative aims to engage voters of color to exercise their right to vote, with a focus on the community members less likely to participate or facing barriers to their participation.

Priority citizens for the voter registration work include people of color eligible to vote who: 1) moved in-state and need to update their registration; 2) are high school and college students; and 3) are returning citizens (men and women who have a prior felony conviction and may need to undergo a rights restoration process before they are able to register to vote); and 4) those who have been purged from voter rolls. Voter mobilization efforts will target people of color described above and others who are infrequent voters.

The initiative is also designed to strengthen organizations’ capacity to mobilize voters over multiple election cycles. Grant funds may be used to support voter registration and mobilization activities as well as cover a portion of organizations’ operating costs.

Activities could include, but are not limited to:

- **Voter registration efforts**, which may include educating priority citizens about the importance of voting and how to register and vote as well as providing voter registration materials;
- **Voter education efforts**, which may include educating priority citizens about the importance of voting, the issues and offices on which they can vote, and the various ways people can cast their ballots in their state;
- **Get-Out-the-Vote efforts**, which may include outreach to secure commitments to vote, reminders to vote, and other encouragement to participate in the election;
- **Use of a variety of methods to reach targeted voters**, such as texting, phone calling, social media venues (e.g. Facebook, Instagram), social media ad campaigns, and other approaches; and
- **Use of in-person approaches only in a manner deemed appropriate by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention given the coronavirus pandemic.**

While the focus of this initiative is on voter participation activities, we recognize that some groups also may be conducting efforts to engage communities in other democratic processes, (e.g., the 2020 census). Grant resources may be used for
other democratic engagement efforts as well. Generally, grant amounts will not exceed 20 percent of an organization’s total budget.

*Grant funds may not be used to advocate for any political party, candidate or ballot initiative.*

All organizations will be required to participate in structured data collection to understand the scope and nature of contacts completed and, to the extent possible, the results of various outreach efforts. Depending on capacity, some organizations may develop, in partnership with the initiative’s Data Partner, additional voter outreach experiments to test the efficacy of particular approaches in encouraging voter registration and participation.

The initiative will make available a limited amount of technical assistance and capacity-building support to funded organizations to strengthen organizations’ voter outreach efforts and overall organizational capacity. This support will be tailored to organizations’ priorities and needs.

**Geographic Focus**
The initiative will support voter outreach in five Southern states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi. In addition to focusing on specific citizens, the initiative will concentrate on regions that historically have had less attention by voter outreach efforts. In Florida, for example, the initiative will focus on priority voters living in North Florida and the lowest propensity voters along the I-4 Corridor. In Georgia, the initiative will focus on priority voters outside of metropolitan Atlanta and especially those in Southern counties.

**Selection Criteria**
Successful proposals will demonstrate the following:

- Strong relationships and history of involvement with the priority citizens
- Expertise and commitment to conducting wholly nonpartisan voter registration and voter mobilization activities;
- A feasible work plan that builds on an informed understanding of strategies to reach targeted communities;
- Organizational capacity to implement the proposed plan of action;
- A commitment to learning from other initiative participants as well as best practices in the field to improve on the organization’s approaches for greatest impact; and
- A commitment to working with the data partner to track progress of voter outreach efforts and their impact through the collection and reporting of related data and information.
Preparing a Proposal

Please complete the Organizational Profile [here] and fill out the Vote Your Voice application [here]. For questions about the Organizational Profile, please contact Mindy Kao mkao@cfgreateratlanta.org.

Vote Your Voice Initiative application:

1) Organizational background [250 words]:
   - Organization’s track record of engaging in voter registration and mobilization efforts and/or related activities
   - Key staff who will implement the proposed activities

2) Proposed use of funds [500 words]:
   - Describe the population the organization aims to engage, e.g. the number, characteristics and geographic region of those the organization is aiming to reach through the project
     State(s) in which activity will occur: ____________
     Counties in which activity will occur: ____________
   - Discuss the strategies the organization will use to reach these communities
     Strategy 1: Description and estimated number of people contacted through this approach ___
     Strategy 2: Description and estimated number contacted ___
     Strategy 3: Description and estimated number contacted ___
     Strategy 4: Description and estimated number contacted ___
     Strategy 5: Description and estimated number contacted ___
   - Discuss approaches used to ensure that all activities and communications by staff and volunteers are nonpartisan, meet 501(c)(3) criteria, and do not include 501(c)(3)-permissible lobbying activity.

3) Provide a timeline for the project’s activities [250 words]

4) Describe how the organization plans to track progress of its voter outreach activities, including both the aspects that will be tracked and the methods for tracking [250 words]

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1 Please note that the initiative will support in-person methods only as deemed appropriate by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention given the coronavirus pandemic.
5) Supplementary support: If applicable, please describe the types of technical assistance and support that would be most useful to you to achieve your project goals. Examples might be: ideas and assistance in utilizing digital approaches to reach target audiences, effective messaging regarding voter registration and participation, and managing staff and volunteers in their outreach efforts in a remote work environment [250 words]

6) Budget
- Amount requested from the Vote Your Voice Initiative;
- Total Project Budget Amount
- Organizational Budget Amount
- List of other project funding sources, including dollar amounts and indications of which sources are committed, pending, or anticipated.

*Upload detailed project budget as a pdf.*

**Timeline: Round Two Grants**

- **July 28, 2020** Organizations are invited to submit proposals
- **August 4, 2020** Applicant Q&A Session, 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. ET
- **August 14, 2020** Proposals due
- **Aug. 17 – Sept. 4, 2020** Proposal review period (organizations may be contacted for additional information during this time)
- **September 8, 2020** Grant decisions announced
- **September 9, 2020** Grant period begins

**About Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta**
Since 1951, the Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta has been connecting the passions of philanthropists with the purposes of nonprofits doing that work. With nearly 70 years serving the 23-county Atlanta region and a robust team of experts, the Foundation inspires philanthropy to increase the vitality of the region and the well-being of all residents.

**About Southern Poverty Law Center**
Southern Poverty Law Center is dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of our society. Using litigation, education and other forms of advocacy, it works toward the day when the ideals of equal justice and equal opportunity will be a reality.