Vote Your Voice Initiative
2021 – 22 Proposal Guidelines

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 a wave of efforts to deny voting rights through state actions such as instituting onerous voter ID laws, limiting access to voting by mail, purging voter rolls, restricting voting rights of returning citizens and other measures. In a number of Southern states, the massive turnout among voters of color in the November 2020 election has prompted a resurgence of efforts to create barriers to voting.

Securing full access to voting and robust voter participation requires a multi-pronged approach entailing voter registration and mobilization, voter protection, the enactment of fair election laws, equitable redistricting 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 continue to promote voter registration and participation to ensure that everyone’s voice is heard and perspective counted in our democracy. Many groups also are working on achieving state policies that ensure voter access among all citizens, including those who were formerly incarcerated. In the year ahead, many groups also are focused on ensuring that the once-a-decade redistricting process yields fair representation for their communities.

The **Vote Your Voice initiative** will provide two-year grants to organizations in five Southern states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi) to work on a **range of activities to secure full voter participation and achieve equitable representation.**
Average grant sizes are estimated to range between $50,000 - $300,000. Grant requests should not exceed 20% of an organization’s total budget for the grant time period. Proposals are due by **March 24, 2021** and grants will be awarded by April 30, 2021.

The Vote Your Voice initiative is sponsored by the [Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)](https://www.splc.org). The SPLC is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements and advance the human rights of all people. The initiative’s fund is hosted at the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, which has served the metro Atlanta region for 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**

The **Vote Your Voice Initiative** will provide two-year grants to organizations in five Southern states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi) to work on a range of activities to secure full voter participation and achieve equitable representation. Such activities include, for example:

- **Voter registration 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 campaigns. Specifically, these activities could include:
  
  o Voter registration efforts, which may include educating priority populations about the importance of voting and how to register and vote as well as providing voter registration materials
  
  o Voter education efforts, which may include educating priority populations about the issues and offices on which they can vote and the various ways people can cast their ballots in their state
  
  o 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
  
  o 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 use of in-person approaches *only in a manner deemed appropriate by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention given the coronavirus pandemic*

Grant funds may **not** be used to advocate for any political party, candidate or ballot initiative, though funds may be used to provide information about ballot initiatives.
• **Efforts to protect voting rights** and ensure full access to voting as well as voting rights restoration for formerly incarcerated individuals. Specifically, these activities could include:

  o Education of the public and/or policymakers about voting rights policies and measures and their impact on voter access
  
  o Leadership development, advocacy and other trainings and workshops for community members focused on voting rights
  
  o Advocacy for measures that promote full access to voter participation
  
  o Engagement of new stakeholders in advocacy efforts

• **Community engagement to achieve fair redistricting.** Specifically, these activities could include:

  o Education of the public and/or policymakers about redistricting and its impact on communities’ fair representation
  
  o Leadership development, advocacy and other trainings and workshops for community members focused on redistricting
  
  o Advocacy on redistricting, which may include the promotion of transparent processes and the development of fair maps
  
  o Engagement of new stakeholders in community-centered redistricting efforts

The Vote Your Voice Initiative also is designed to strengthen organizations’ overall capacity. Grant funds may be used to support the activities noted above as well as cover a portion of organizations’ operating costs. In addition, the initiative will make available assistance and convening opportunities to strengthen organizations’ civic engagement efforts and build their networks. Grant funds may be used to cover the staff time and related resources to engage in such activities.

**Selection Criteria**

Successful proposals will demonstrate the following:

• Strong relationships and history of involvement within the communities the organization plans to engage

• 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

Proposals that include voter registration and mobilization activities also should demonstrate the following:

- Expertise and commitment to conducting wholly nonpartisan voter registration and voter mobilization activities
- A focus on populations less likely to be reached by other voter outreach campaigns because of geography and/or specific population characteristics
- 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. 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

Proposals that include efforts on voting rights and voting rights restoration also should demonstrate the following:

- A track record of effective advocacy on issues concerning communities of color
- A demonstrated understanding of voting rights issues
- A track record of and commitment to working in partnership with other community organizations to maximize the effectiveness of advocacy efforts

Proposals that include engagement in redistricting also should demonstrate the following:

- A basic understanding of redistricting processes and issues related to fair community representation, particularly for communities of color; and
- A track record of and commitment to working in partnership with other community organizations to maximize the effectiveness of advocacy efforts.
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 VoteYourVoice@cfgreateratlanta.org.

Vote Your Voice initiative application:

1. Organizational background:
   
   A. Organization’s track record and accomplishments related to the proposed activities
   
   B. Key staff who will implement the proposed activities

2. Proposed use of funds:
   
   A. The organization is applying for grant funds for the following areas of work (mark all that apply):
      
      ▪ Voter registration and mobilization ___
      ▪ Voting rights advocacy _____
      ▪ Voting rights restoration _____
      ▪ Fair redistricting _____

   B. Describe the population the organization aims to engage, e.g. the characteristics, geographic region and approximate number of those the organization is aiming to reach through the project

   C. For each of the areas of work checked in (2A), describe:
      
      ▪ Project goals
      ▪ The major activities the organization will undertake to reach those goals (please quantify to the extent possible)
      ▪ A timeline for the project activities
      ▪ The approach to measuring progress
      ▪ The organizational partners with whom you will work: please list your principal organizational partners and discuss how you work together

   D. Voter mobilization: tracking progress and building understanding
      
      An important component of the Vote Your Voice Initiative is tracking the progress of voter outreach and increasing knowledge in the field about effective voter outreach strategies. Therefore, for those conducting voter outreach, we are interested in how you track your voter outreach and how we can most easily assess progress.

      Please specify whether you track your outreach:
___ At the individual voter level (with a voter ID number) via a VAN account
___ At the individual voter level (with a voter ID number) via another voter tracking system
___ By total number of contacts only

Please specify how you will report your voter outreach data:
___ Sync VAN account with the Vote Your Voice partner BlueLabs (preferred method, if possible)
___ Arrange for a regular data transfer from a non-VAN account to BlueLabs
___ Regularly report on total number of contacts by method of contact (if voter ID numbers are not tracked)

E. Discuss approaches used to ensure that all activities and communications by staff and volunteers are entirely nonpartisan and meet 501c3 criteria

3. Supplementary support: If applicable, please check whether you would use the following types of technical assistance, if offered, with “likely,” “possibly” or “unlikely.”

Voter outreach
  o Creating voter outreach lists
  o Tracking outreach
  o Analyzing impact of outreach
  o Other: ______________

Digital organizing
  o Best practices information
  o Tailored technical assistance for implementation
  o Other: ______________

Communications
  o Research on effective messaging
  o Tailored technical assistance for implementing communications campaigns
  o Other: ______________

Convenings/networking
  o With other groups in our state
  o With other groups working on similar projects across states
  o Other: ______________

Other assistance: __________________

4. Budget:
Total annual organizational budget: ____
Total project budget: ____ (please upload)
Amount requested: ____

List of other project funding sources, including dollar amounts and indications of which sources are committed, pending or anticipated.

**Timeline**

February 24, 2021  Organizations are invited to submit proposals

March 5, 2021
11 a.m. – noon ET  [Informational webinar]

March 24, 2021  Proposals are due

March 25 – April 23  Proposal review period (organizations may be contacted for additional information)

April 30, 2021  Grant decisions announced

May 1, 2021 – April 30, 2023  Grant period

**About Southern Poverty Law Center**

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people. Using litigation, education, and other forms of advocacy, the SPLC works toward the day when the ideals of equal justice and equal opportunity will be a reality.

**About Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta**

Since 1951, the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta has been leading and inspiring philanthropy to increase the vitality of our region and the well-being of all residents. With 70 years serving the metro Atlanta region and a robust team of experts, the Community Foundation expands its philanthropic reach and impact by providing quality services to donors and bold, innovative community leadership. For more information, visit: [www.cfgreateratlanta.org](http://www.cfgreateratlanta.org).