

2022 Voter Engagement Grants: Evaluation Report

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2022 Voter Engagement Grantee Quote



“Our nonpartisan voter engagement work allowed us to reach historically overlooked communities, including members of the BIPOC community, immigrants, and lower income renters. Our work amplified the voices of people who had not always been included in the civic engagement or political process, and helped their voices be heard in the community and in our democracy through voting.”



INTRODUCTION

MCN's support of nonprofit advocacy & voter engagement

The nonprofit sector has long been a champion of civic participation. Whether volunteering for a food shelf, serving on a board, or running for office, we believe a healthy society provides robust and equal opportunity for civic participation. Voting is for many the first and most consistent act of civic participation, one which lays the foundation for a lifetime of community engagement.

At MCN, we strongly believe in protecting and expanding civic engagement and encourage every eligible voter to exercise their right to vote in local, county, state, and federal electoral processes.

Throughout the years, MCN's policy team has worked with a range of democracy partners to promote voter education and voter engagement. During election years, MCN engages the Minnesota nonprofit sector through newsletters, social media, and events designed to increase capacity to promote voter registration and other voter engagement efforts. Many of these events serve to demystify the methods nonprofits can and cannot use to promote voter turnout during election seasons, which is an ongoing concern voiced by our membership partners.

In 2020, MCN partnered with a foundation to fund nonprofits to increase voter engagement in Minnesota during the 2022 mid-term elections, after successfully partnering with those organizations for Census outreach in 2020. MCN identified partner organizations who were interested in promoting voter education and had existing trusted relationships with their communities. Organizations consisted of small, BIPOC led/serving, and rural nonprofits.

The grantees leveraged their connections and expertise to provide resources and knowledge to support disenfranchised citizens in exercising their right to vote. Over 105,000 Minnesotans were engaged in the 2020 elections through outreach and education led by the grantees. In 2021, the redistricting process took place following the 2020 Census. Minnesota kept all eight Congressional seats and the state population increased by 7.4% for a total of 5,706,494 Minnesotans. The redrawn district maps were released in February 2021 and nonprofits, government agencies, and community groups worked together to educate the public on the impact.

2022 Voter Engagement Grantee Quote



“Our staff are now more informed about the voting process and how to promote the election and participation while remaining nonpartisan. For those we serve, the opportunity to invest time and resources into this type of outreach led to increased understanding of the election process in the United States and the importance of voting.”

INTRODUCTION

Nonprofit's critical role in 2022 elections

Nonprofits have a critical role in promoting community participation and building community power. We are all stronger when our democracy is strong. We are all stronger when communities are using their voices and power to help shape and change the systems that impact them every day – especially communities that have been historically disenfranchised.

Historically, Minnesota has had one of the highest eligible voter turnouts in the nation, and we aim to expand on that tradition. Statewide voter engagement efforts are conducted collectively between advocacy entities, community partners, government agencies, and foundations. In partnership with our collaborators, MCN engages people from every corner of the state to ensure they have the knowledge, resources, and support to vote in local, state, and national elections.

A primary risk to voter engagement in 2022 was that mid-term election visibility tends to be less than presidential election visibility with statewide voter participation around 50-64 percent in prior years.

The 2022 mid-term election stakes were particularly high after the prior two years of COVID-19 restrictions and ongoing discussions of racial and socioeconomic factors in our democratic processes. **Because of new districts and multiple races on the ballot, ensuring every eligible voter had accurate information about their registration and polling place was top 2022 priority.**

2022 Mid-Term Election Timeline:

- March 8: Township Elections
- June 24 - August 8: Primary Election early voting by mail or in-person
- July 19: Deadline to pre-register for Primary Election
- August 9: Primary Election Day
- September 23 - November 7: General Election early voting by mail or in-person
- October 18: Deadline to pre-register for General Election
- November 8: General Election Day

All voters had these races on their 2022 General Election ballot:

- All eight MN U.S. Representatives
- Governor & Lt. Governor
- Secretary of State
- State Auditor
- Attorney General
- Judicial seats
- 201 seats in the MN Legislature

Some voters also had one or more of these races on their ballot:

- School Board Members
- County Officials
- Township Officers
- City Officers
- Local Ballot Questions



INTRODUCTION

'Democracy Is In Our Hands'

To promote voter engagement, MCN chose a theme and artwork that would resonate across Minnesota. The slogan chosen was “Democracy is in our Hands”. MCN hoped to have captured the truth that democracy is not about one election, and we encourage every nonprofit to be active in advocating for change.

To support voter engagement grantees, MCN provided resources, including:

Nonpartisan Nonprofit Election Guide

This guide supported grantee efforts with key information and engagement ideas, including:

- Permissible nonpartisan election activities.
- Ideas to jumpstart grantee efforts like candidate questionnaires and voter guides.
- Important election information including what's on the ballot, how to vote, and voting information for specific communities.

Social Media Toolkit

This digital toolkit supported grantee communications and messaging, including:

- Sample messages with key information for nonprofit communities, including voter registration reminders, how to vote if you're a new citizen or experiencing homelessness, and what's on the ballot.
- Social graphics to catch your audience's attention.
- 'Democracy Is In Our Hands' artwork. Designed by [Ntxoo Art](#) to represent Minnesota communities, illustrations were available for nonprofits to incorporate into social media banners, e-newsletters, publications, and more.



VOTER ENGAGEMENT GRANTS

Selection criteria

Grant Requirements

- 501(c)(3) organization or a fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3)
- Organization must engage with voters who historically have not been included in voting engagement efforts. These communities include Black, Indigenous, and communities of color, immigrants who have become citizens, people with disabilities, people who are renters, college students, LGBTQ, low income, persons formerly not eligible to vote due to involvement with judicial system, people experiencing homelessness, and residents of rural Minnesota.

We were particularly interested in funding:

- Culturally-specific organizations, which are defined as organizations whose mission is specific to and rooted in an ethnic, racial, or cultural community or communities that has/have been historically marginalized, and whose broadly defined leadership (board and staff) largely reflects the constituents they work with and are rooted in historically disenfranchised communities.
- Organizations focused on people in rural areas of Minnesota.

Selection Process

When the application period ended, we had about \$200,000 to grant out. After we calculated the total amount of grant requests, we quickly realized that additional funding was needed. 90 organizations across the state applied for a total of \$1,225,816 in grant requests. Right away, we requested additional grant funding from our funders. McKnight Foundation approved our request which allowed us to grant out an additional \$140,000 to nonprofits. Even with extra support, we could only fund 27% of the total grant applications.

The grants review committee was comprised of six individuals – a mix of nonprofit partners, MCN board members, and staff with diverse racial and geographic backgrounds and experience in grantmaking and advocacy work. The committee reviewed grant applications and made recommendations based on the grant framework, including prioritized populations, geography, voter engagement and budget plan, and for Category 2 applicants, also having a history of successful community organizing.

We had several meetings that included thoughtful and deep discussions on the grant applications and then ultimately selected and finalized grantees. We had hard decisions to make as this was a competitive process with limited funds. Our selected grantees range from disability organizations in the Twin Cities to Asian American organizations engaging folks in the suburbs to Latinx organizations serving Spanish speaking residents in southeast Minnesota.

Grant Funding Tiers

Category 1: \$5,000 to support the cost of voter engagement efforts. These grants were designed for nonprofits that can do critical elections engagement work in their communities, whether they have done voter engagement work in the past or whether this was their first foray into the work.

Category 2: \$10,000-\$25,000 to support the cost of voter engagement efforts. Category 2 grants were for organizations who have a history of large-scale voter engagement or organizing their communities around other important issues (Census, issue-based advocacy, etc.). Organizations who applied for this grant needed to illustrate past community organizing efforts.

VOTER ENGAGEMENT GRANTS

2022 grantees

Congratulations 2022 Voter Engagement Grantees

Access Press
African Career, Education and
Resources Inc. (ACER)
American Indian OIC
Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency
CAIR-MN
CAPI USA
Comunidades Organizando el Poder
y la Accion Latina (COPAL)
East Side Freedom Library
Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota
Hired
Hmong American Partnership
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota
Indian Cultural Association of
Minnesota (ICAM)
Karen Organization of Minnesota (KOM)

LifeGate Services
Lincoln Park Resource Center
Living Well Disability Services
Minnesota Independence College &
Community (MICC)
Partnership Resources Inc.
Pillsbury United Communities
Project FINE
Rise, Incorporated
SEWA-AIFW
Transforming Generations
The Aliveness Project
The ANIKA Foundation
The Arc Minnesota and Rev UP MN
The MN Village
Unite Cloud
Urban Homeworks

Grant Amounts

21 organizations received
Category 1 grants (\$5,000).

10 organizations received
Category 2 grants (\$10,000 -
\$25,000).

Grantee Geography

16 Twin Cities Metro and
surrounding suburb
organizations.

Seven Greater Minnesota
organizations.

Eight statewide
organizations.

Grantee Focus Areas

- Workforce development
- Economic justice
- Housing
- Education
- Disability services
- Immigration
- Mental & physical health services
- And more

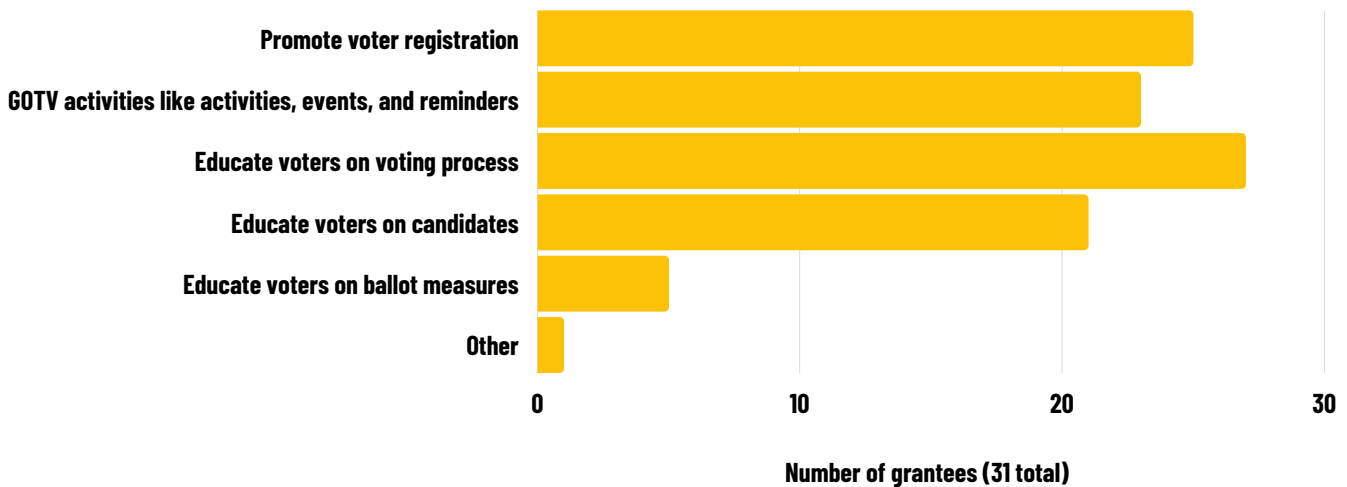
GRANTEE IMPACT

Grantee goals and strategies

Grantee Voter Engagement Goals

Grantee organizations identified multiple goals for their voter engagement. Many organizations wanted to educate voters on the voting process. Organizations also focused on promoting voter registration and encouraging people to vote through GOTV activities, events, and reminder systems.

What were the goals of your organization's voter engagement work? Select all that apply.



2022 Voter Engagement Grantee Quote



“The support from MCN gave us a launching pad through showing the importance of Voter Engagement in the disability community. It spread excitement across the organization to do more. It has inspired leadership to think about how we engrain advocacy work more deeply in what we do each and every day.”

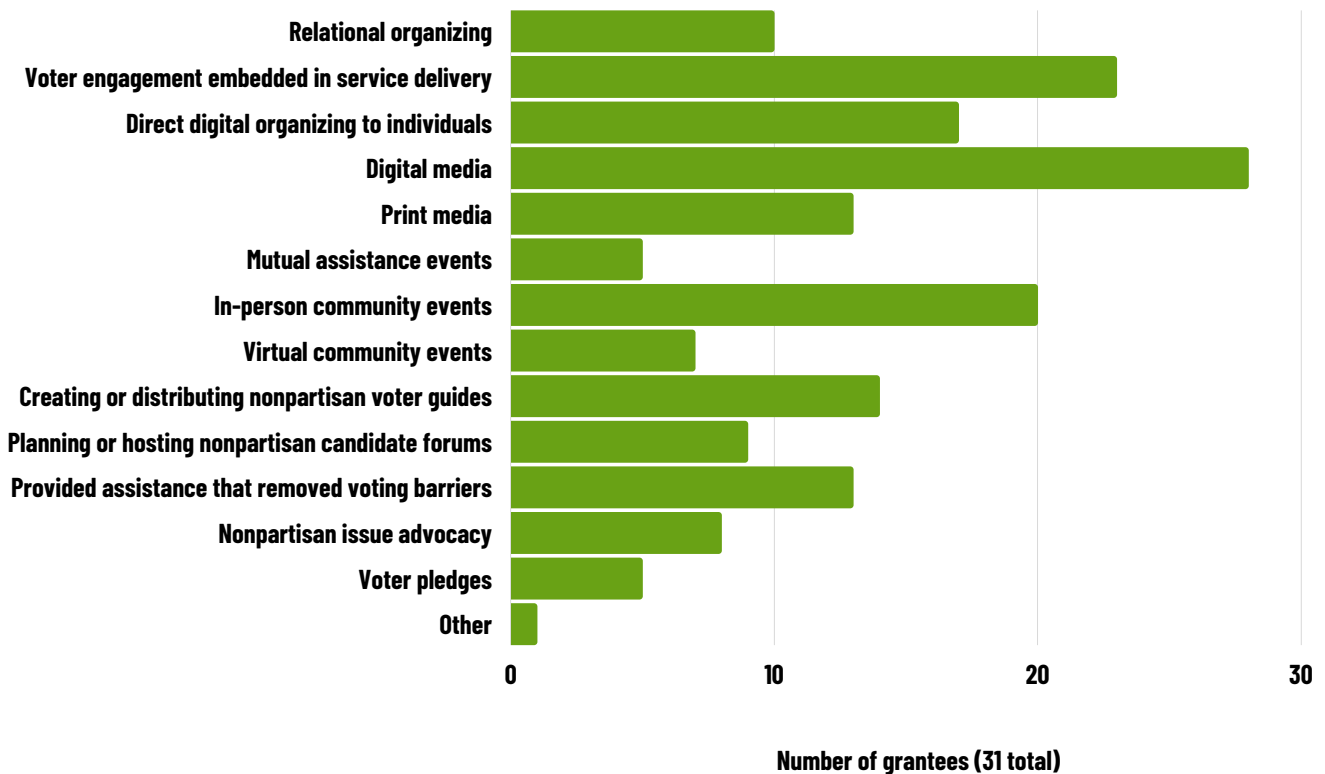
Grantee Voter Engagement Strategies

Canvassing and in-person community events were some of the most popular ways that grantees interacted with communities.

Most organizations held in-person events which was particularly useful following two years of mostly virtual events. Organizations shared information in newsletters, ads, and voter guides. Some grantees had one-on-one conversations to decrease language barriers. Direct service organizations weaved in voter education when delivering services. This is a great strategy as nonprofits tend to have trust with the clients they serve and can educate on the voting process and encourage clients to register to vote.

Other organizations used direct digital organizing like postcards, phone calls, and text messages, and others used digital media.

What types of voter engagement strategies did you use?



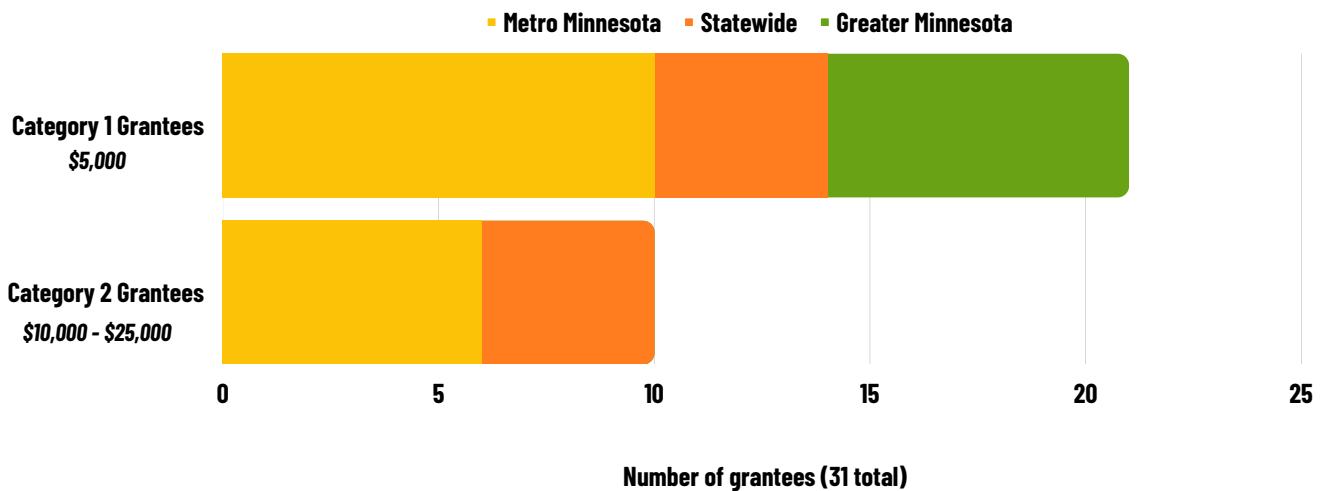
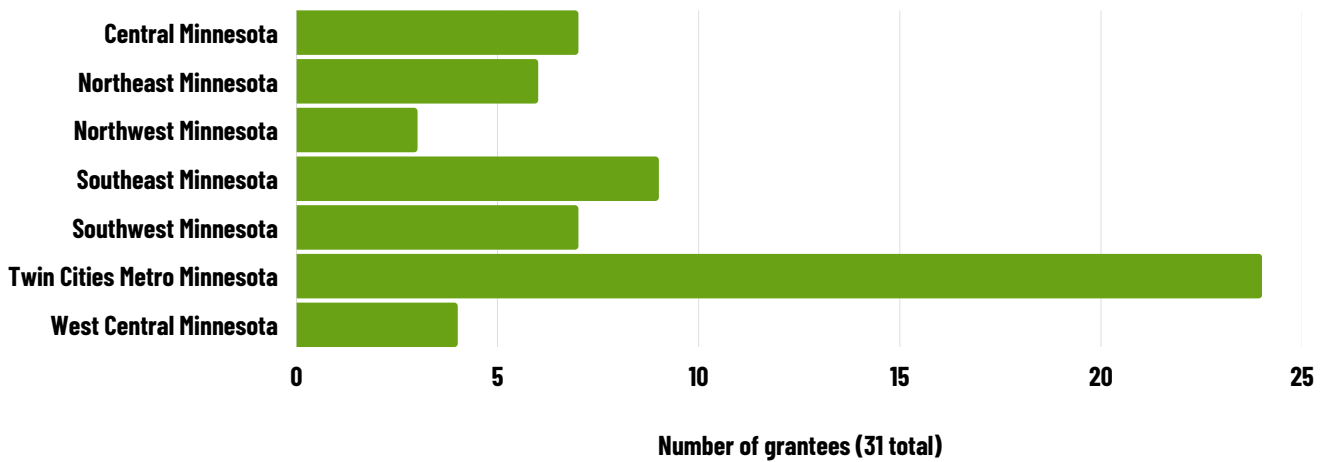
GRANTEE IMPACT

Regions and communities engaged

Grantee Regions Engaged

Our goal was to spread funding to organizations across the state. The majority of grantees (52 percent) were based in the Metro area, but many had statewide reach. Additionally, significant funding went to southern and central Minnesota. The biggest challenge was finding nonprofits in northern Minnesota to partner with. During the grant selection process, the committee sought out northern Minnesota organizations to ensure their communities were supported in the 2022 election.

What Minnesota region(s) did you impact with the funding you received from MCN's Voter Engagement grants?



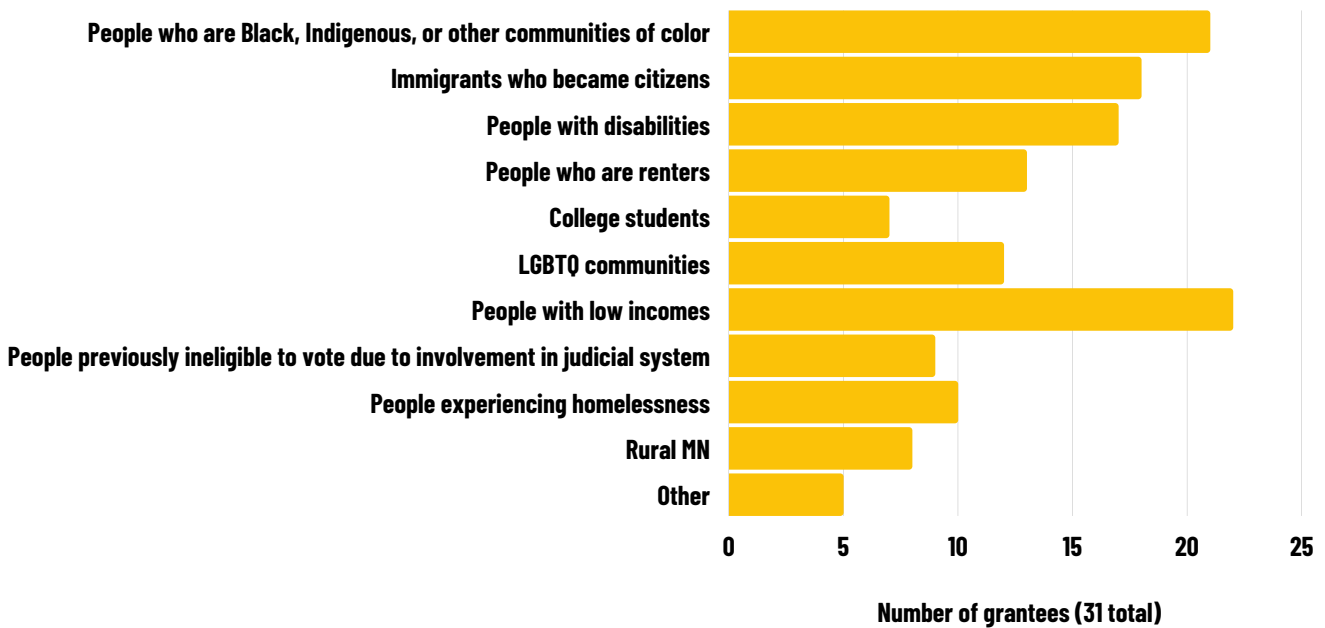
GRANTEE IMPACT

Regions and communities engaged

Grantee Communities Engaged

The main goal of the grants was to engage communities who have not been historically included in engagement efforts. People with low-incomes, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and immigrants who have become citizens had the highest engagement from our grantees. Because the categories are not mutually exclusive, one engaged voter can fall into numerous categories. The community-based nonprofit grantees engaged a wide variety of individuals through these grants.

What historically under-engaged communities did you impact with the funding you received from MCN's voter engagement grant?



2022 Voter Engagement Grantee Quote



"It allowed us to enhance and be more intentional about getting people to be educated about voting and registering to vote. Whereas, in the past we would just make a mention of it, this funding allowed us the time to go more in-depth and allowed us a farther reach with those we come into contact within community."

GRANTEE IMPACT

In-person events

The Covid-19 pandemic drastically changed the way we interacted with each other, with nonprofits facing this challenge as well. As we move forward following the pandemic, it is important for nonprofits to engage with the communities they serve via face-to-face interactions. From organizations hosting mutual assistance events to door-knocking in the community, our grantees connected with their constituents in person.

Below are some highlights from in-person voter engagement events:

“Our organization used relational organizing with individuals and small groups through door knocking and public events. Our organization attempted nearly 8,000 door knocks and made over 1,600 door knocking contacts in order to register voters, notify individuals of upcoming events, and share voting information.”

“We reached approximately 130 people through door knocking over the course of a few days.”

“Our resident organizer knocked on doors to hand out our voter guides as well as answer any questions residents had about voting, registering to vote, and the election in general.”

“We did four days of canvassing, Asian neighbors to inform and empower their vote. We did 30,000 door knocking in St. Paul area.”

“Our organization hosted in-person community events, including two candidate forums ahead of the primaries, one for Brooklyn Park and one Brooklyn Center.”

“We hosted door knocking events with COPAL organizers, members, and volunteers to speak directly with 4,576 community members in Rochester, Mankato, Minneapolis, and St. Paul. For those we could not reach, we left nonpartisan door hangers with information about the election and a link to our website with additional information.”

“In addition to our targeted outreach, our staff shared information about voting with people informally during the course of providing interpreting services, advocacy and information referrals or our educational programming.”

“We held voter outreach and voter information sessions throughout mid-October until the day of the election at local mosques during Friday Prayer.”

GRANTEE IMPACT

Digital media collaboration

While most organizations mainly focused on community events and face-to-face interactions, social media was often used to broadcast information easily and rapidly. This allowed important voter information to reach people who did not attend in-person events.

Below are some highlights from the digital media collaboration:

“For our voters engagement event, we registered seven members and reached over 100+ through our online and social media campaign.”

“We did hundreds of voter registrations. We kept voter resources flyers in Indian restaurants, grocery stores, faith-based locations etc. It helped so many people. We did post Sangam TV and MN Local files.”

“We reached 10,000 people through all our channels. This includes 5,000 printed papers, 4,000 Twitter followers, 1100 [people on] Facebook and an average of 600 readers a day visiting our site.”

“We hosted resident meetings virtually to discuss the importance of voting, what’s on the ballot, and how to vote.”

“On November 3, 2022, in time for voting day on November 8, a virtual webinar was organized. Melanie Hazelip, director of voter outreach from the Minnesota Secretary of State’s office joined us to provide resources and tools for community members and answers questions about voting. Two youth volunteers, also spoke about their story.”

“We used a variety of social media tools including our website and social media channels to distribute get out the vote and voter registration information.”

“We used our grant from MCN to create a digital voter guide geared toward residents of Powderhorn, East Phillips, North Minneapolis, and Cedar Riverside. The guide covered all the candidate's community members would find on their ballots along with general information about how to vote.”

“Much of our engagement was by going to heavily trafficked events such as the solidarity street gallery or setting up a table with voter information at various locations around the East Side. The tabling engagement along with digital media helped to reach a large number of East Siders.”

CONCLUSION

MCN staff were honored to facilitate and support the work of these amazing grantee nonprofits. As trusted messengers, they have access to communities that otherwise receive little to no information about voting, or tools to enable voting.

We offer special thanks to the McKnight Foundation and an anonymous foundation, both of whom were generous in financial support and validating the important role nonprofits can play in elections.

We thank all the nonprofits who took time to apply, helping us to see the wide breadth of opportunities for nonprofit involvement.

We thank our grants selection committee, who took their role very seriously.

And most of all we thank our grantee nonprofits and their staff who did the work and so beautifully upheld the nonprofit sector's commitment to a strong democracy.



About the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits

The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (MCN) works to inform, promote, connect, and strengthen individual nonprofits and the nonprofit sector. Together with our 2,200 members, MCN helps nonprofits accomplish their missions for a healthy, cooperative, and just society.

Learn more: www.minnesotanonprofits.org



Illustration and Nonpartisan Nonprofit Election Guide layout credit [Ntxoo Art](#).

