

The Case for Funding Voter Engagement work:

Political and electoral mobilization presents a crucial opportunity for the progressive sector to elevate the voices and issues of disadvantaged communities. We believe that grassroots organizations and their members need to get more involved in the electoral process by including an electoral component in their organizing and advocacy work, and educating their constituencies about the importance of voting and holding their elected officials accountable.

All FACT grantees focus on civic engagement, political education and leadership development to enable low income and people of color constituencies to advocate for beneficial public policies in their own voices. Many FACT grantees have found that voter engagement work is a critical tool to build power for their members. In addition to the community organizing, these groups do voter registration, voter education and get-out-the vote activities during election periods. A number of FACT's community organizing grantees have recently come together to create the nascent "Pushback Network" in eight states that is designed to educate and mobilize voters, as well as to enable the sharing of best practices and technical assistance among Network members.

FACT offers a special discretionary grants fund of up to \$5,000 per grant to its core grantees for strategic voter engagement opportunities that arise during the year. FACT earmarks \$30,000 per year of its discretionary fund for this purpose every year regardless of whether it is an off election year or not. In addition, FACT provides general operating support to some non-profit technical assistance providers to help its organizing and intermediary grantees with legal compliance, media, technology and other technical support for voter engagement endeavors.

FACT plays a leadership role in the Funders Committee on Civic Participation (FCCP), serving both on the Steering and Program Committees. FACT supports the ongoing work of the Voter Engagement Evaluation Project (VEEP), which analyzed the involvement of 501c3 organizations in the 2004 election cycle. The Project highlighted successful stories, unique models, challenges and obstacles as well as best practices in written reports available through the FCCP and Proteus Fund, and at several funder convenings in New York and San Francisco and at various funder conferences.

For more information on the 2004 Presidential election year voter engagement work, please read Top Ten Lessons for Funders regarding 501 c3 voter engagement work by Heather Booth and Stephanie Firestone.