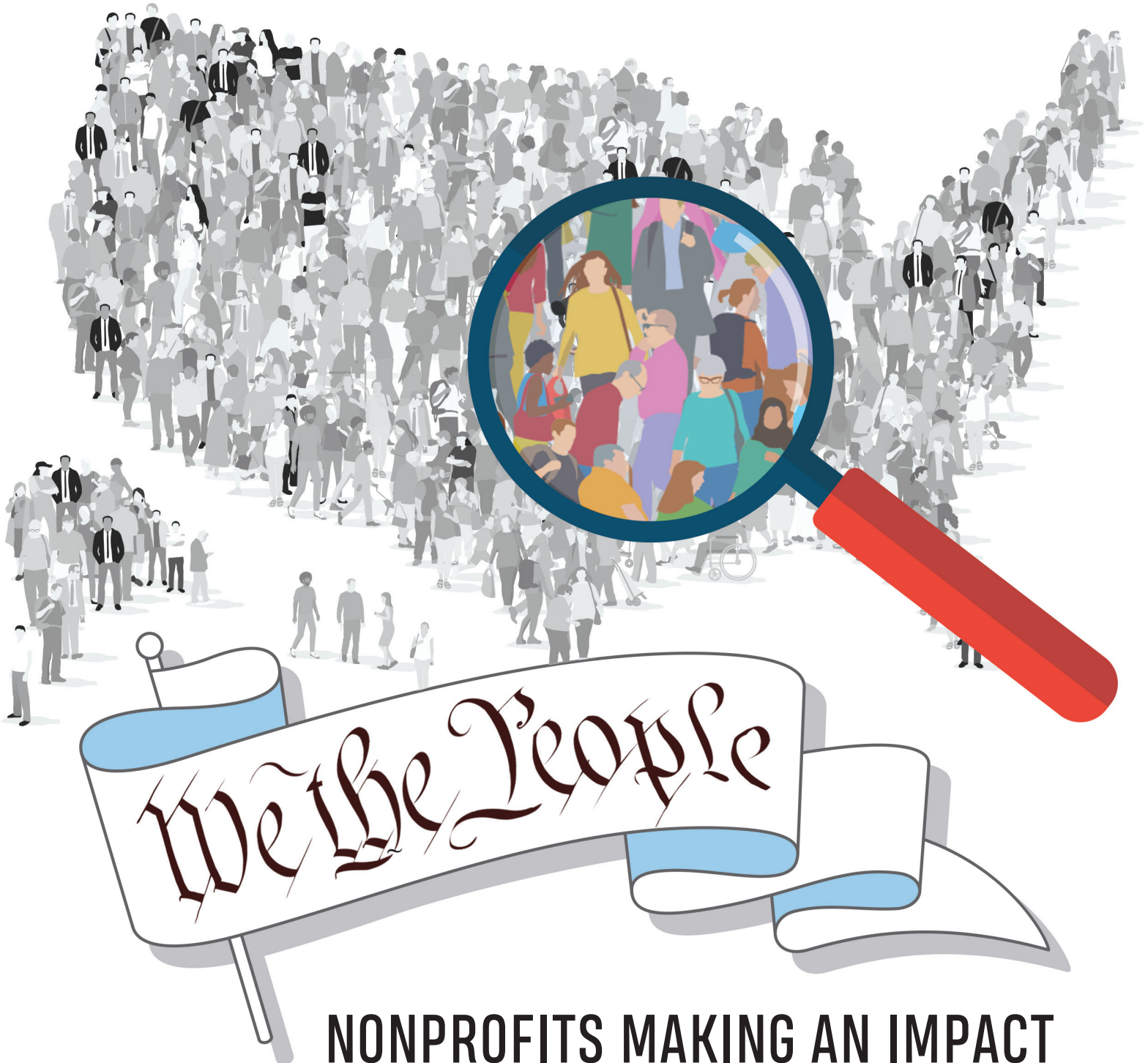


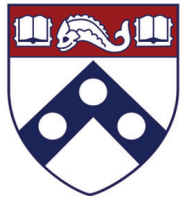


The Center for
High Impact Philanthropy
School of Social Policy & Practice
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA



NONPROFITS MAKING AN IMPACT TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY

*A SUPPLEMENT TO **WE THE PEOPLE: A PHILANTHROPIC GUIDE TO STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY***



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The Center for High Impact Philanthropy is a trusted source of knowledge and education to help donors around the world do more good. Founded as a collaboration between the School of Social Policy & Practice and alumni of the Wharton School, it is the premier university-based center focused on philanthropy for social impact. To learn more, visit:

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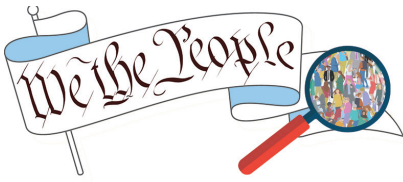


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Nonprofits Making an Impact

In “We the People: A Philanthropic Guide to Strengthening Democracy,” the Center for High Impact Philanthropy presented a framework aimed at helping all types of funders—foundation professionals, individual donors, family foundations—identify opportunities for advancing a more vibrant and healthy democracy.

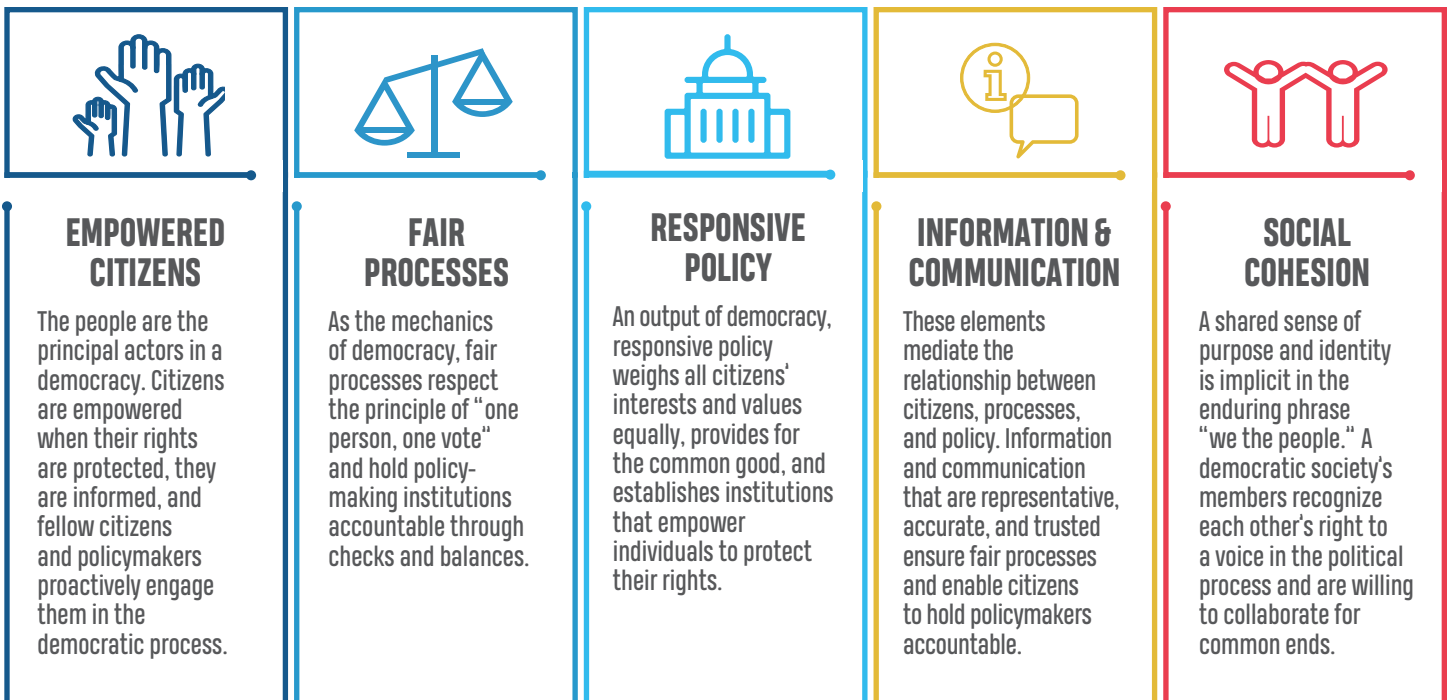
In that guide, we identified five elements that characterize a strong democracy: empowered citizens, fair processes, responsive policy, information & communication, and social cohesion. To illustrate how funders can incorporate that framework into their grant making, we analyzed two program areas that emerged as especially promising, increasing civic engagement and reinvigorating local media, and we highlighted specific nonprofits doing exemplary work.

To help funders identify the attributes of impactful programs, this document provides more detail on the work of the eight nonprofits highlighted in the original guide. You’ll find a one-page profile for each nonprofit. Each profile starts with what the nonprofit does, then discusses its effectiveness, and ends with examples of how funders can help. We start with nonprofits working to increase civic engagement, followed by nonprofits working to reinvigorate local media.

You can download the original philanthropic guide free on our microsite, where you can also find links to these nonprofits and others, access news and web-exclusive resources, and contact CHIP for updates. Visit www.impact.upenn.edu/democracy.

5 ELEMENTS OF A STRONG DEMOCRACY

The CHIP team analyzed eight widely-used indices for measuring democratic health; reviewed dozens of relevant academic and non-academic documents; examined grants to 150 nonprofit organizations in the democracy space; and conducted interviews and workshops with a variety of stakeholders including scholars, funders, and practitioners. Synthesizing all these various sources of evidence, we arrived at these five elements of a strong democracy. Any philanthropic opportunity that supports one of more of these elements serves to strengthen democracy.



EXAMPLES OF HOW TO INCORPORATE OUR FRAMEWORK

Increasing Civic Engagement

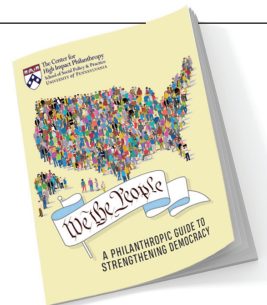
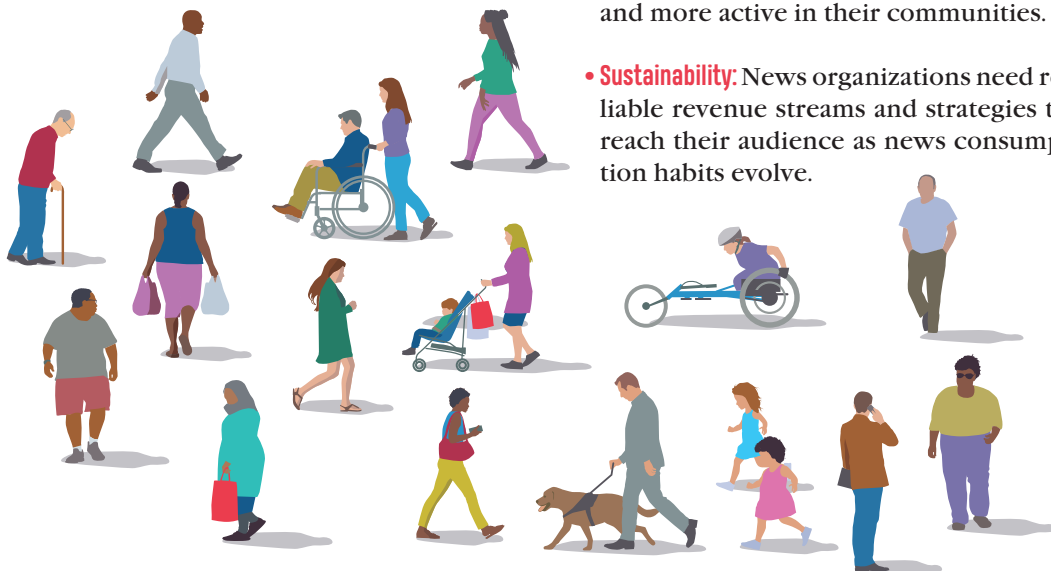
Civic engagement encompasses a broad range of activities related to democracy, from donating to charity to running for political office. It includes the work of long-standing membership nonprofits and faith-based efforts, as well as new, technology-supported initiatives. While there is a breadth and diversity of civic engagement efforts that donors can fund, we focus on three related forms of civic engagement. Each affect the five elements of a strong democracy and tie into our overall funder framework.

- **Civic Membership:** Joining voluntary associations fosters social cohesion and empowers citizens by aggregating individual voices.
- **Deliberative Participation:** Forums for public discourse lead to more informed citizens and richer communication among citizens and elected officials.
- **Voting:** Sustained, broad-based participation in elections—local, state, federal, and primaries—enforces policymakers' accountability to citizens.

Reinvigorating Local Media

Local media is the collection of communication outlets, newspapers, radio stations, and hyperlocal websites, among others, that tell the stories of a specific community. Healthy local media ecosystems are at the heart of all five elements of a well-functioning democracy. Journalists provide transparency into elections and legislative processes to ensure their fairness, in addition to aggregating the viewpoints of citizens so policymakers can be responsive. When local media outlets reflect a community's stories back to them, they help build social cohesion. Local news can empower citizens to act on the information they receive and hold elected officials accountable. Here's what funders can support to ensure local media are serving their community in ways that strengthen democracy:

- **Quality Coverage:** Professional, representative journalism is informed by communities' perspectives and meets their critical information needs.
- **Engagement:** When reporting invites citizens' participation by every possible means—contributing to stories, reading and sharing articles, joining public debate—those citizens are better informed and more active in their communities.
- **Sustainability:** News organizations need reliable revenue streams and strategies to reach their audience as news consumption habits evolve.



To learn more about the Five Elements of a Strong Democracy and how to apply them to philanthropy, download the full framework, "We the People: A Philanthropic Guide to Strengthening Democracy" at impact.upenn.edu/democracy



INCREASING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: NONPROFIT MAKING AN IMPACT

League of Women Voters Maine

WHAT IT DOES

Founded in 1920 with the advent of women's suffrage, the League of Women Voters (LWV) is a national organization consisting of 700 state and local chapters and more than 50,000 individual members. LWV's autonomous local chapters support citizens working together on local issues, while their state and national affiliates sponsor debates and advocate face to face with policymakers. Since this federated structure mirrors federal political institutions, it helps facilitate the connection between grassroots mobilization and legislative politics.

LWV of Maine exemplifies how this structure can translate broad-based civic engagement to actual political reform. LWV of Maine regularly conducts in-depth studies of Maine's political and electoral institutions and disseminates its findings to the public, relying on seven local chapters that partner with libraries, schools, and other civic institutions where voters congregate. Subjects of these studies include money in Maine politics, citizen initiatives, and ranked choice voting (RCV).

In 2018 Maine became the first state to use RCV in federal elections due in

large part to LWV of Maine's efforts. Deciding elections by voters' ranked preference of candidates discourages hyper-partisan campaign tactics and increases opportunities for third-party candidates. Coordinating with 300 members and its local chapters, LWV of Maine planned more than 200 events (voter registration drives, candidate forums, etc.) and distributed its voter guides at 800 locations (schools, libraries, cafes, and bus stops). These activities ensured voters understood the new ballot so they could cast an informed vote on election day.

HOW EFFECTIVE IT IS

Earlier successful reform efforts led by LWV of Maine created public financing for election campaigns, restored same-day voter registration, and mandated increased transparency in lobbying the state legislature. In 2011 after publishing its study of RCV, LWV of Maine officially endorsed RCV for all single-seat elections. While its 501(c)4 partners organized a referendum campaign, LWV worked with its local chapters and civic partners to distribute its study and deliver presentations to educate voters on how the new system would work, as

well as the pros and cons of adopting it. After five years of sustained effort, in 2016, the reform passed.

LWV of Maine's model and mission were critical to the reform's successful passage. Many good-government advocates are effective in mounting legal challenges and legislative campaigns, and grassroots organizers have mobilized popular support for pro-democracy reforms. But LWV is distinctive in housing both approaches within the same organization. This model was once prevalent among civil society organizations; the historical shift away from federated membership organizations to professional advocacy has been identified by scholars as a driver of the growing sense of disconnect between citizens and government.¹

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Funders can support the League of Women Voters by becoming a member or by making a donation to the national organization or any of the over 700 state and local chapters. Membership dues vary, but for LWV of Maine, individual members pay \$55 per year. LWV relies on philanthropy to cover about two-thirds of its annual revenue, while membership dues and a variety of earned revenue sources cover the remaining one-third.

LWV of Maine has identified a number of ways philanthropists can help: \$5,000 to expand translation of its voting rights materials to Spanish and French, in addition to the Somali and Arabic translations it already produces; \$10,000 to create, host, and promote digital voter registration training; \$25,000 to improve distribution of voter guides in hard-to-reach rural and immigrant communities; and \$50,000 to cover the costs of a full-time organizer who could establish 20 new community partnerships and two new chapters.



INCREASING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: NONPROFIT MAKING AN IMPACT

Generation Citizen

WHAT IT DOES

Civics education helps students develop the knowledge, skills, and disposition to participate effectively in the democratic process. Analyses of the most civically engaged Americans have found that civics education in high school is a powerful predictor of whether citizens vote and participate in membership organizations later in life.² However, the courses that historically prepared students to be effective citizens are no longer staples of high school curricula. Generation Citizen (GC) helps teachers incorporate action-based projects into civics education, preparing students to be active participants in democracy.

GC provides middle and high school teachers with the curriculum, training, and support for a semester-long civics course that embeds civic participation into the classroom through projects such as circulating petitions or contacting lawmakers. The organization operates in six states (RI, NY, CA, TX, OK, MA, plus a remote program) and engaged more than 14,000 students in 141 schools during the 2017-18 school year. In most GC classrooms, teachers are supported by Democracy Coaches, college students who volunteer to advise and mentor their “near-peers.” In addition to direct support for experiential civics learning, GC works toward making civic engagement a staple of school curricula and culture through its own advocacy efforts and as part of the CivXNow coalition of foundations, academic institutions, and nonprofits supporting civics education.

HOW EFFECTIVE IT IS

GC’s curriculum targets three factors that increase a student’s likelihood of future civic engagement: civic knowledge, skills, and motivation. An external

study found a statistically significant increase in students’ confidence in their ability to affect change. Students whose social studies classes featured the GC curriculum also had greater knowledge of local government. While 40 states currently have some civics requirement for public schools, none mandate the experiential learning that GC emphasizes. Such experiential learning improves students’ ability to apply knowledge in the real world. Internal GC evaluations found that after participating in its program, nine in 10 students indicated they could make a difference in their communities and believe that challenging injustice is important, and seven in 10 improved their collaboration skills and knowledge of local government structures. Over half increased in civic knowledge, skills, and motivation.

One GC school in Lowell, Massachusetts, provides evidence of the program’s impact. Responding to the growing prevalence of “vaping” in their school, GC students researched marketing of the product and developed an action plan. They contacted legislators and eventually presented

their research to a state representative who introduced a bill to limit the sales of vaping products in youth-accessible stores. Generation Citizen also provides students opportunities for ongoing engagement through its student leadership committees, which advocate for civics education.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Roughly 75% of GC’s annual revenue is from philanthropic sources, while the remainder comes from modest fees of about \$2,500 per school. GC estimates the cost of supporting an individual student at \$100. Introducing programming to a classroom in a new school, which includes training teachers and supporting Democracy Coaches, costs about \$5,000 per semester. Expanding within schools to support multiple classrooms and grade levels is less costly. GC estimates the cost of school-wide support at \$10,000 per year. Schools that embrace the curriculum can operate without a Democracy Coach, and are therefore less cost-intensive. Donations can support GC’s national organization or any of its six program sites. Funders can support civics education more broadly through the [CivXNow](#) coalition.





INCREASING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: NONPROFIT MAKING AN IMPACT

Orton Family Foundation

WHAT IT DOES

Many U.S. towns and small cities have been destabilized by growth and development, while others are suffering from loss of industry, population decline, and uncertainty over their future. To empower community responses to these challenges, the Orton Family Foundation supports resident-driven town planning through its Community Heart & Soul program. By helping communities identify shared values that inform planning decisions, Orton Family Foundation fosters social cohesion and responsive policy at the local level.

Since 2005, the Heart & Soul program has been implemented in more than 60 U.S. towns. It begins with a local partner, typically a foundation or planning department, that assembles active members of the community into a Community Advisory Team (CAT). With support from Orton staff, the CAT develops and implements a plan to analyze existing community social networks and engages a broad, diverse group of residents to create shared value statements. These value statements inform a planning process that identifies specific actions for

the community. Heart & Soul projects take a variety of forms, including long-term land use plans, new local policies, and the creation of new public spaces.

HOW EFFECTIVE IT IS

In 2008 Orton awarded a \$100,000 grant to Golden, Colorado, to create a long-term development plan: *Golden Vision 2030*, finalized in 2010. Through various CAT events, over 2,000 residents—more than 11% of Golden's population—participated. Leaders from low-income and immigrant communities that were previously suspicious of the city developed relationships with the planning department through Heart & Soul events. As of 2019, more than 20 publicly funded capital and operational improvements informed by the *Golden Vision 2030* have been completed or are under way, including a pedestrian bridge and expanded trails at the Clear Creek recreational area.

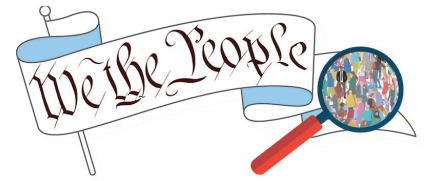
A study by the Wake Forest Medical School conducted interviews and focus groups with 125 CAT team members and participants across nine Heart & Soul communities. Interviewees in all four towns that had fully im-

plemented the model at the time of evaluation cited evidence that Heart & Soul values were informing policy decisions. For example, three of the towns revised their comprehensive plans to reflect input from the Heart & Soul process. Town agencies also developed ongoing capacity to incorporate citizen input, in one case forming a citizen advisory committee, and in another instituting a deliberative forum for town budgeting. Interviewees reported that the Heart & Soul program enhanced trust in local government and fostered new and stronger relationships among residents. The process developed new leaders in communities, in three cases leading to CAT team members running for public office.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Orton estimates the cost to carry out the Heart & Soul model at \$100,000 over the course of two years. The majority of these funds, up to 60% depending on the market, go to compensating a full-time coordinator to handle long-term and day-to-day demands that can be time intensive. The remainder of the budget includes the costs of marketing, hosting events, and analyzing community input. Past communities have received grant funding from Orton, but now are more commonly financed by local partners. Projects that emerge from the model are typically funded by public expenditures or local foundations.

Finally, the program relies on significant volunteer efforts and in-kind contributions from community members. Orton is a private operating foundation based in Shelburne, Vermont. Funders can support its work through its [local partners](#) sponsoring ongoing projects, or contact the foundation about implementing the model in their own community.



INCREASING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: NONPROFIT MAKING AN IMPACT

Draw the Lines PA

WHAT IT DOES

This organization models how technology and in-person engagement can be used to foster broad, deliberative participation. As the population of political districts has made opportunities to speak directly to our representatives more scarce, civic tech entrepreneurs have developed ways for citizens to communicate en masse. Online petitions and mass email campaigns are scalable, but one-dimensional means of conveying citizens' views. In 2017 the [Committee of Seventy](#), a Philadelphia-based good-government advocate, launched a statewide competition that invites Pennsylvanians to draw their own congressional map using an interactive online tool. Called Draw the Lines PA, this initiative helps citizens make informed and effective contributions to the debate on gerrymandering, fosters broad participation through in-person events, and facilitates face-to-face meetings between citizens and policymakers.

The project includes statewide contests, wherein citizen-drawn maps are evaluated on six criteria (compactness, population equivalence, etc.) and a personal statement demonstrating that the individual consulted with others about their map. High schools, colleges, and civic organizations throughout the state co-host events with Draw the Lines, including “mapathons” where people collaborate on maps. In addition to a cash prize, contest winners are invited to Harrisburg to present their map in the State Capitol.

HOW EFFECTIVE IT IS

Draw the Lines demonstrates citizens' capacity to successfully engage on a complex subject. Since 2017, Draw the Lines has held two mapping con-

tests that included over 150 in-person events, attracted more than 6,000 people, and resulted in 2,685 citizens creating maps on DistrictBuilder, the website hosting the redrawing tool.

Contest winners presented their maps in the State Capitol where representatives from 15 legislative offices were in attendance. Some 83% of participants reported that participation increased their knowledge of gerrymandering, while 60% said their involvement made them feel they could take action on the issue. This sense of efficacy stands in contrast to limited public input during Pennsylvania's 2011 reapportionment process, when the Senate State Government Committee unveiled the map and voted to approve it on the same day without opportunity for public response.

The maps also provide policymakers with a more detailed account of citizen preferences than common alternatives like petitions, polls, or form letters sent by advocacy organizations. The more time-intensive and detailed a citizen's communication is, the more seriously policymakers take it.³ Draw the Lines engages citizens with a com-

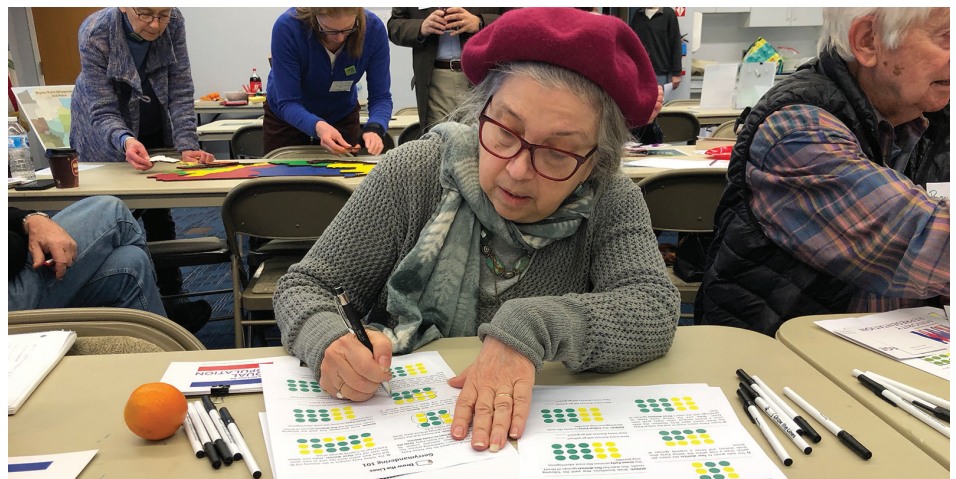
plex policy issue and allows them to make a meaningful contribution to the debate on political representation.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The cost of running a statewide contest, including \$35,000 in total prize money, is about \$320,000. Each contest's events engage about 3,000 people, nearly half of whom register to use the online tool, translating to a cost of \$357 per mapper.

Draw the Lines and parent Committee of Seventy rely exclusively on philanthropic support. Additional funding would enable it to reach more mappers and hold more “mapathons” at various high schools and colleges, which cost between \$3,000 to \$4,000. In its next round of contests, it hopes to grow the number of schools involved in the project from 50 to 90. Draw the Lines' partners in schools and civil society have requested a mapping platform for redrawing state legislative districts. The mapping tool would cost between \$30,000 to \$40,000 up front and then an additional \$2,500 per month to maintain online.

Funders interested in supporting similar efforts in other states can find citizen-led redistricting campaigns compiled by [Common Cause](#).





INCREASING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: NONPROFIT MAKING AN IMPACT

Faith in Action

WHAT IT DOES

Many voter mobilization efforts are led by organizations that “parachute in” a month before an election and fail to take advantage of existing civic infrastructure. Faith in Action uses an integrated voter engagement approach to embed voter mobilization into the activities of faith-based organizations. Its sustained engagement efforts empower citizens to participate across and between multiple election cycles. They tap into existing social networks (congregations), connect political participation to issues that the community cares about, and ask volunteers to recruit their friends and family. Its chapters model how relationships and social networks can amplify the reach of civic engagement efforts.

Faith in Action is a national network of community organizers fighting against racism, discrimination, and economic inequality. The model brings together congregations from all denominations and faiths as the institutional base, creating a values-based organization for change. Because affiliated chapters have strong community roots, they aim to solve local, neighborhood issues before moving on to

broader issues at the city, state, and federal levels. Further, Faith in Action provides leadership training to organizers and clergy members centered on five key objectives, including how community organizing can fight racism and discrimination, build relationships across faith, race, and socioeconomic lines, and promote community empowerment.

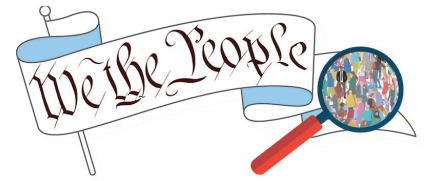
HOW EFFECTIVE IT IS

In organizing faith-based communities, Faith in Action taps into networks that are more diverse and representative than most organized civic groups, which are disproportionately white, college-educated, and professional.⁴ When mobilized, these networks have successfully engendered responsive policy. Since each chapter’s local issues are distinct, the organizing tactics vary across geography. An Indianapolis chapter successfully campaigned for a ballot measure to expand bus service so that three times as many people had access to a low-cost commute. A Massachusetts chapter organized a legal challenge that prevented 2,000 Hurricane Maria evacuees from being evicted from their temporary housing.

Its Florida chapter, Faith in Florida, organized support for a referendum restoring voting rights to returning citizens with felony convictions in the state. In partnership with 800 congregations throughout the state, Faith in Florida coordinated a “Souls to the Polls” campaign that brought 200,000 voters in 30 cities to vote on the Sunday before election day. Thanks in part to these efforts, the referendum passed in November 2018. Faith in Florida is continuing its work to protect newly restored voting rights from attempts to restrict them through ongoing advocacy efforts.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Faith in Action’s model allows for funder support at both the national and local levels. Its chapters, called federations, rely exclusively on philanthropic revenues, volunteers, and in-kind contributions, while the national organization collects dues from individual federations. There are currently 45 active chapters in 20 U.S. states, with three new federations being developed in Georgia, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Giving to the national affiliate of Faith in Action supports the development of new federations, training programs, and federal advocacy work on issues such as disaster relief, immigration reform, and criminal justice reform. Donations for federations support local advocacy, organizing, and training efforts. Faith in Florida estimates the cost of training a congregation’s leadership on integrated voter engagement at between \$150 to \$300. “Anchor congregations” take on greater responsibilities, organizing other congregations and hosting phone banks. Faith in Florida estimates staff time and equipment for an anchor congregation’s three-month campaign cost \$25,000 to reach 4,000 voters face-to-face or over-the-phone.



REINVIGORATING LOCAL MEDIA: NONPROFIT MAKING AN IMPACT

Resolve Philadelphia

WHAT IT DOES

Too often, negativity surrounding news coverage leaves citizens ill-equipped to solve problems in their communities.⁵ A growing movement of journalists is working to change that. Resolve Philadelphia is an organization that develops and advances journalism built on equity, collaboration, and the elevation of community voices and solutions. Its flagship initiative, the Resolve Reporting Collaborative, is a partnership with more than 20 newsrooms reporting on communities that are working to solve pressing local issues. By shedding light on community efforts to create positive social change, Resolve's work empowers citizens to take action and encourages responsive policy.

Resolve launched originally as a project of the Solutions Journalism Network, which trains journalists to rigorously report on responses to social problems. As criminal justice reform advocates were mobilizing ahead of Philadelphia's 2016 District Attorney election, Resolve debuted *The Reentry Project*, a series of articles focusing on the experiences of citizens returning from prison. In 2018 Resolve became an independent organization and turned its attention to economic mobility, introducing *Broke in Philly* to report on resources available to the one-half of Philadelphians who can't make ends meet and tracking the city's push towards economic security for all.⁶ Now in its second year, the *Broke in Philly* collaborative includes 23 local newsrooms and one academic institution. The project has its own dedicated website where it curates content, and stories are cross-published on partnering organizations' websites.

While its newsroom partners do the reporting, Resolve's editorial team co-

ordinates events and shares documents and ideas that help generate stories. Events have included info sessions with employers on the benefits and challenges of hiring formerly incarcerated employees and a hackathon to develop tech resources for people experiencing poverty. To strengthen the editorial process, Resolve provides a shared reporters guide, a story ideas channel on Slack (a cloud-based collaboration hub), and lists of contacts and upcoming articles. The editorial team also conducts focus groups, sends a weekly newsletter, maintains a social media presence, and looks closely at story feedback.

HOW EFFECTIVE IT IS

Broke in Philly has published more than 325 stories and videos on economic mobility. Reporters in partner newsrooms attest that the capacity and diversity of perspectives Resolve provides leads to articles that outlets could not report in isolation. The collaboration—which includes *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, local NBC and Telemundo affiliates, public radio, ethnic media, single subject news sites, and digital

startups—ensures that stories reach a large and diverse audience. *The Reentry Project*, which coordinated a similarly broad and diverse partnership, won the Associated Press Media Editors' Community Engagement award.

Resolve reporting has enabled responsive policy. After *The Reentry Project* reported on challenges faced by deaf detainees, the Philadelphia Department of Prisons hired sign language interpreters. Following a *Broke in Philly* story showing that nearly \$3 million in bail fees for resolved cases were retained by the city of Philadelphia in 2018, Pennsylvania's First Judicial District revoked the policy. The city now retains no bail for resolved cases.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Funders can support Resolve directly or by supporting the newsrooms that make up the reporting collaborative. The main costs of the year-long *The Reentry Project* were a \$70,000 salary for the project editor and a \$65,000 fund administered by the collaborative to support reporting, events, and additional project support. Funders can also donate to the [Solutions Journalism Network](#) which supports journalists practicing solutions journalism.





REINVIGORATING LOCAL MEDIA: NONPROFIT MAKING AN IMPACT

City Bureau

WHAT IT DOES

This nonprofit civic journalism lab based on the south side of Chicago has been reinventing local journalism since 2015. City Bureau has expanded who reports and contributes to stories and has created forums where citizens engage with public affairs. It trains new journalists who may not have professional reporting experience or journalism degrees, and engages community members previously excluded from public discourse. Making the journalism workforce more representative of its audience results in more comprehensive coverage and develops new audiences.⁷

City Bureau increases access to critical information and citizen engagement through three main programs: An 11-week Civic Reporting Program partners fellows (early career journalists) with team leaders (experienced journalists) to report news and mentor young Chicago media-makers. Its Documenters program recruits, trains, and pays community members \$15 an hour to report on public meetings of school boards, zoning commissions, and others that few people attend but where major policy decisions are

made. Its Public Newsroom program hosts weekly workshops where journalists and guest speakers gather with the public to share resources and discuss local issues to make journalism more engaging while building the community's journalism capacity.

HOW EFFECTIVE IT IS

With its programs, City Bureau provides more comprehensive and relevant coverage by expanding and diversifying the sources of information it uses to inform stories. For example, in the 2019 local elections, while other city papers published voter guides based on surveys written by their editorial boards, City Bureau reporters conducted interviews with 30 residents of the Austin neighborhood to identify the issues most important to their community, then asked candidates how they would address them. Its Public Newsroom has hosted more than 100 workshops since 2016 on topics such as upcoming elections, police accountability, and housing segregation.

City Bureau also lowers barriers to entry for becoming a journalist and engages a broader, more representative public in the reporting process.

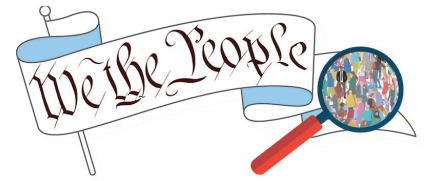
The 5,000 Documenters City Bureau has trained over the past three years range in age from 19 to 73; 61% identify as female and 32% identify as black or African-American. At the *Chicago Tribune*, one of the city's largest newspapers, just 38% of newsroom staff is comprised of women and 7% is African-American.⁸

Since 2016, Documenters have covered some 500 public meetings, amounting to more than 2,000 hours of assignments. City Bureau has partnered with more than 50 local community organizations to host Documenters' trainings, inform their fellows' reporting, and expand the audience for its stories. These community organizations, which include hyperlocal news sites, neighborhood associations, and legal service providers, then become part of a network that is sourcing and disseminating stories.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

City Bureau receives two-thirds of its funding from philanthropic sources, with the remaining one-third of revenue generated through reporting, research, and consulting. Its anchor funders include foundations such as Democracy Fund and MacArthur, which helped the effort launch in Chicago. Additional philanthropic funds would help finance more assignments for Documenters, which cost the organization about \$30 per public meeting. City Bureau's four-person civic reporting teams cost about \$13,500 for 11 weeks of reporting on a specific topic.

Funders can support City Bureau directly or replicate the model in other communities: Mississippi Today has adopted the Public Newsrooms while Detroit's WDET, Outlier Media, and CitizenDetroit have replicated the Documenters program. City Bureau estimates it costs \$175,000 to \$200,000 to fully pilot the program.



REINVIGORATING LOCAL MEDIA: NONPROFIT MAKING AN IMPACT

American Journalism Project

WHAT IT DOES

Advertising revenue for traditional print media has been declining for decades, decimating the traditional business model for the industry and leading to layoffs in newsroom staff. All this translates into fewer people covering local issues and fewer communities with quality coverage of local schools, politics, and other critical information. The American Journalism Project (AJP) is an initiative that seeks to grow the resources available for local journalism by investing in a new model for sustainable, mission-based news organizations.

AJP's strategy is three-fold: fund existing nonprofit newsrooms through grantmaking, provide intensive support to develop grantees' fundraising and commercial media capacity, and build a movement of support for this model. Co-founded by the leadership of the *Texas Tribune* and Chalkbeat, two of the largest locally-focused nonprofit news organizations, AJP seeks to expand their revenue model to nonprofit newsrooms across the country, thereby increasing the resources available for coverage of local issues that communities depend on.

AJP, which has raised \$42 million to date for the initiative (with a goal of \$50 million), will offer grants and support to civic news organizations (CNOs). With a long-term goal of catalyzing \$1 billion in financial support for independent local news, AJP seeks to bolster the precarious financial model that supports many CNOs. Some 46% of nonprofit news organizations have less than \$500,000 in annual revenue and 42% rely on just one or two revenue streams, typically from foundation grants.⁹ AJP newsrooms will be launched using philanthropic funds and then sustained via a mix of

digital subscriptions, advertising, and fundraising, so that each source constitutes roughly a third of each news organization's revenue.

HOW EFFECTIVE IT IS

AJP's two co-founders have proven with their own news outlets that they can make CNOs more financially sustainable. The *Texas Tribune* launched in 2009 with a staff of 18, and has grown to 63 fulltime employees by 2018. Just 25% of its \$9.5 million in annual revenue comes from foundations, compared to 57% in the nonprofit news sector overall. In one weekend the *Tribune* raised \$2 million at TribFest18, a multi-venue conference attended by over 5,000 people. These financial resources now support a 40-person editorial staff covering Texas politics and public affairs.

Chalkbeat, an education news website, has relied on a similar mix of philanthropy, corporate sponsorship and audience support to grow its budget by more than 100% over the past three years. With \$7 million in revenue and a 51-person staff, it now

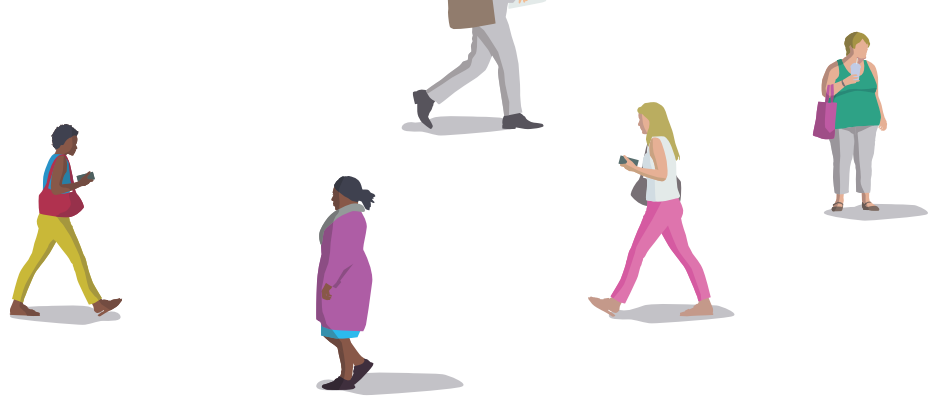
has reporters in seven cities, most recently expanding to Newark, filling a gap after the *Star-Ledger* reduced its newsroom staff by more than half in the past decade. As the business model for local papers no longer incentivizes in-depth coverage of local issues, Chalkbeat and *Texas Tribune's* growth demonstrates the viability of an alternative, philanthropic model that ensures communities' critical information needs are met.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

AJP will provide multi-year grants ranging from \$500,000 to \$1.5 million to 25 to 35 organizations starting in late 2019. With their investment, AJP will catalyze matching funds from local philanthropic organizations. An essential use of grant funds will be to hire revenue-generating team members whose efforts will find sustainable sources of funding (audience support, sponsorships, and local philanthropy) that support the CNOs long-term.

Philanthropists can give directly to AJP, or work with their preferred newsroom to submit a proposal for AJP's first round of grants. Funders can find a list of local, nonprofit newsrooms at the Institute for [Nonprofit News](#).





Methodology

Through the course of the literature review and interviews that informed our philanthropic guide to strengthening democracy, we compiled a list of 37 organizations whose missions aligned with our focus on the two deep dive areas of strengthening local media and civic engagement. These organizations were contacted to request interviews. Twenty-five interviews with these practitioners gave us insight on how these strategies can be applied most effectively, as well as re-

ferred to exemplary organizations. These referrals constituted a shortlist of 14 organizations which was narrowed to the eight profiled in this document on the basis of the following criteria: geographic balance, alignment with aspects of civic engagement and local media highlighted in our guide, and evidence of impact. We then conducted multiple followup interviews with the eight exemplar organizations to provide further evidence of impact and cost-effectiveness.

Endnotes

- 1 Theda Skocpol. "Diminished Democracy." 2003.
- 2 Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman, and Henry Brady. "Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics." 1995.
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- 6 United Way of Pennsylvania. "ALICE in Pennsylvania: A Financial Hardship Study." 2019. <https://www.uwp.org/wp-content/uploads/ALICE-Report.pdf>
- 7 Ashley Alvarado. "Enhancing Newsroom Diversity Can Also Expand Audiences." 2015. <https://niemanreports.org/articles/enhancing-newsroom-diversity-can-also-expand-audiences/>
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- 9 Institute for Nonprofit News. "INN Index: The state of nonprofit news." 2018. <https://inn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/INN.Index2018FinalFullReport.pdf>

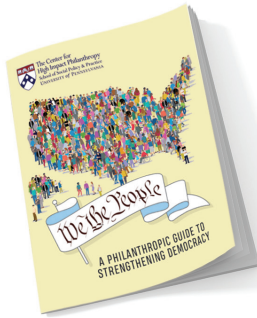
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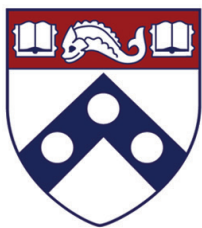


Additional Resources on the Web



To learn more about how we chose the nonprofits in this guide, download our framework, “We the People: A Philanthropic Guide to Strengthening Democracy.” On our microsite, you can dive deeper and find more resources, including what large foundations are doing, strategies for identifying high impact opportunities, and frequently asked questions about philanthropy, democracy, and more.

www.impact.upenn.edu/democracy



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