

Introduction

Mississippi is known for voter suppression tactics to discourage voters from participating in the electoral process. One Voice is committed to building a stable, well-educated electorate that improves Mississippians' lives regardless of age, race, or class. To do so, One Voice led a few initiatives in 2020. We launched a Census campaign to ensure Mississippians received a fair count. We also established a mini-grant program for groups and organizations across the state of Mississippi to conduct voter registration and GOTV efforts during the November 3 general election. We completed the yearly Election Protection Program to address any voting concerns leading up to November 3.

One Voice partnered with the regional Census Coordinator for Mississippi and other partner organizations to ensure that Mississippians receive a fair count. As we entered the beginning of the Census amid the COVID-19 pandemic, we were fearful yet optimistic about the number of families who would respond. While the pandemic created opportunities for individuals to stay home and complete the Census online, it continues to expose families' barriers without internet access. We've spent the last year and a half educating communities about the Census. Although most of our targeted communities have been African American, we spent January touring migrant communities impacted by the Mississippi ICE raids in August 2019.

Targeted Areas Based On 2010 Census Results:

Tier 1: Counties under 59% participation rate during 2010 Census (Amite, Bolivar, Claiborne, Hancock, Holmes, Issaquena, Jasper, Jefferson, Kemper, Leflore, Quitman, Sharkey, Tallahatchie, Wilkinson)

Tier 2: Counties under 69%: (Marshall, Panola, Pike, Scott, Hinds (Jackson)*, Stone, Adams, Harrison, Humphreys, Lauderdale, and Lawrence) * Jackson was at 72% but had several pockets of underperforming areas).

The first of the year found One Voice continuing to engage community leaders, elected officials, and anyone across Mississippi willing to listen to us discuss the importance of the 2020 Census. Through a partnership with the NAACP, the Census Bureau, and other community partners, we traveled the state to help communities establish complete count committees and identify ways to motivate people to respond to the census questionnaire.

An accurate census count is critical to the State of Mississippi, and One Voice understands that our future depends on this count. The 2020 Census is a civic responsibility that we should all participate in, and it's an opportunity to help shape Mississippi for the next decade. The data collected from the 2020 Census is used to determine a lot of critical decisions, such as how to allocate more than \$675 Billion in federal funds to support states, counties, and local communities, how to draw lines for redistricting, and how to distribute the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Working with Mississippi's Census Partnership Specialists and partnering with the Mississippi NAACP, One Voice conducted 19 regional Census Solutions workshops, engaging over 450 people while touching 15 counties in the state. We were able to identify trusted voices within these communities to help craft messages that resonated with their people. Additionally, Pastor Jose Rodriguez, a trusted voice within the Latinx community, helped us coordinate a week of census education workshops in six counties. We needed to remove barriers, so the workshops were conducted in Spanish, with translated materials, and in communities where Latinx people were the most comfortable. Victor M. Cora, the Florida Partnership Specialist, facilitated the meetings and answered questions about immigrants and the Census. He emphasized the importance of them being counted in the 2020 Census.

Recognizing the faith community's importance in our social justice advocacy, we engaged multiple faith denominations by hosting a Faith Leaders Census Solutions luncheon. During the luncheon, we walked them through ways they could incorporate Census messaging into their sermons and church services. They were equipped with a faith-based toolkit that included sermon prompts, Bible study materials, and social media messages.

In March, just when Mississippi households started receiving their online invitations, the pandemic hit our state and caused a halt to all in-person interaction. This resulted in a change in our outreach strategy since we could no longer conduct in-person events. One Voice looked for other ways to continue this vital work and continued to engage people across the state through Zoom meetings, social media challenges, and conference calls. Partnering with the Mississippi NAACP, we launched a Phone Banking Campaign in May. We trained well-over 60 volunteers who successfully made over 130,00 calls! As a result of this effort, we were able to speak

with 7,530 respondents, resulting in 5,960 expressing that they had completed their Census and 1,559 reporting that they had not finished it or were unsure if someone else in the household had done so.

The pandemic caused the Census Bureau to push the deadline for responding to October 31, 2020. This will give us additional time to engage our communities and encourage them to be counted. We are striving daily to get Mississippi's participation level to increase and improve our self-response rate. Our goal is to have every person in Mississippi counted!

Census Outreach

As we shifted our outreach strategy to mostly phone banking, we recruited volunteers from our Civic Engagement Roundtable to make calls in targeted areas, beginning in April.

Phase 1 (April-May) Twin County is an area in the Mississippi Delta where residents have been engaged in organizing work around their Electric cooperative. These organizers made calls within this area that includes four counties.

Phase 2 (May-June) Yazoo Valley Census Calls - this is another Electric cooperative service area where residents could call their service area to continue building relationships with constituents by reminding them about the Census.

Phase 3 (June-July) Counties Under 30% in 2010 - We were able to cast a wider net during this phase because of increased volunteer assistance.

Phase 4 (July-November) Census All Counties - These calls represented the final round of volunteer calls before the end of the Census response period. We changed the script during this round of calls to include a message about the upcoming November Election.

During this period, the total calls were 246,667, with 12,221 responding to calls while the remaining calls were either unanswered or left messages.

Other digital outreach strategies included social media targeting and text messaging along with our partner, MS Votes.

Another important strategy was to establish communities establish Complete Count Committees (CCC) to maximize the necessary partnerships needed to increase the Census count in their communities. We assisted four communities in establishing CCC's: ***the City of Jackson, Humphrey's County, Winston County, and Jefferson Davis County***. Additionally, we provided resources as requested from other communities for events.

CER Mini Grantee Program

One Voice offered general support mini-grants to 63 groups and organizations conducting non-partisan voter registration/GOTV/ Voter protection efforts during the November 3 general election. With a quick turnaround time and smaller grant amounts, our mini-grants had a meaningful impact on a broader range of communities across the state.

Baseline Criteria

One Voice focused its mini-grant funding on the One Voice Civic Engagement Roundtable communities. Organizations submitted project plans that included a description of the work you propose to create with this funding; the project's overall goal; how the project would positively impact targeted county residents; and outreach/voter engagement plan, timeline, and measurement outcomes/evaluation.

Grant Amount

One Voice offered general support mini-grants ranging from \$500 to \$5,000. Upon receiving a countersigned original of the grant agreement and W-9, One Voice disbursed one-time, lump-sum payments of the full amount of the grant amounts offered. It was expressly understood that One Voice did not have any obligation to provide additional funding to grantees by making these grants.

Grant Report Requirements

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Grant Report Requirements

Mini-grant final grant reports were due on November 30. Grantees were to provide to One Voice written reports that described the grantee's general activities and finances during the relevant period and confirm that grantee had fully complied with the terms of the agreement. Grantees submitted reports to One Voice via JotForm.

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Organization Information

One Voice is a civic engagement, non-profit organization working to democratize public policy. Specifically, our work is designed to identify and address issues of public concern so we can make a difference in the civic life of vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Our approach to civic engagement encompasses four phases: Development, Voting, Policy, and Governance. Instead of only pursuing a strategy for electing officials, One Voice's four phases of civic engagement deepen the relationship communities have with the governing process creating an environment where governance encourages community partners and community-led solutions.

One of One Voice's marquee models of civic engagement is our Civic Engagement Roundtable, commonly referred to as the "Roundtable." Our Roundtable's participation has known ebbs and flows, as it has been heavily issue-based.

Restrictions

One Voice did not fund individuals, political parties, candidates, or partisan political organizations. Also, grantees agreed not to use grant funds to influence the outcome of any specific public election, or participate, intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements) any political campaigns on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office. Also, funds were not to be earmarked for lobbying, carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation.

Grantees

Action Communication and Education Reform Inc.
Alpha Epsilon Lambda,
Apogee Group II
APRI Statewide
CFDC
Chama Gulf Coast
Clay County NAACP (Youth Council)
Clinton MS Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority
Clinton NAACP
Coastwide Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Committee
Columbus/Lowndes NAACP
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority - Alcorn Alumnae
Desoto County NAACP
Eta Phi Lambda Chapter Alpha Phi Alpha, Inc.
Fannie Lou Hamer Center
Forrest County NAACP
Gowdy Association of Neighbors
Helping Hands Outreach
Hill Temple #783
I Believe Project
Jackson Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi, Fraternity Inc.
Jackson Association of Educators
Jackson Chapter of the Links
Jackson Hinds Alumni Chapter
Jeff Davis County NAACP
Juneteenth -Columbus, Inc.
Ladybug Outreach
Lane Chapel CME
Leading Ladies MS
Lee County NAACP

Lincoln County NAACP
Love Vets
Lynch Street CME Church
McComb NAACP
MCUP Community and Youth Leadership Institute
Mississippi Roses (M.S.) Chapter of the Links
MLICCI
MS Move
MS Re-Entry
Noxubee County NAACP
Oktibbeha NAACP
O.P. Lambda Alphas
Panola County NAACP
Pearl River County NAACP
Project Ahead/NAACP
Reaching and Educating for Community Hope Foundation
Refuge Temple Church
Revitalize MS
Rho Iota Zeta Chapter
Rho Lambda Alphas
Robinson-Watson Book Company
Six Dimensions
South Central APRI
Sunflower County NAACP
Susie J. Neal Temple #1102
Twin Forks Rising,
Unlimited Love Me
Vicksburg-Warren NAACP
Winston County NAACP
Yazoo County NAACP
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. Alpha Delta Zeta Chapter

Outcomes

As a result of the mini-grants, we were able to reach over 625,000 individuals, touching all 82 counties of the state of Mississippi through door to door contact-less canvassing; text and phone banking and online voter education; purchasing of radio spots to do live remote broadcasts to encourage citizens to register and get out to vote; transporting seniors to the circuit clerk's office to vote absentee; educating the re-entry communities on what disenfranchisement charges disqualifies them from voting; and the development of material that was specific to the grantee's community (sample ballot, list of precincts, etc.).

Non-partisan organizations and community advocates promoting voter education and protection to combat voter suppression tactics and restrictions significantly impacted our communities. They aided in circumventing voters from being negatively affected by restrictive voter laws, registry purges, polling closures through general voter education.

By integrating civic engagement as a part of citizens' everyday lives, we can increase the community's understanding of and participation in the democratic process. As a result, we can change elections' outcomes through a more representative society and equitable legislative policy.

Election Protection

Mississippi is known for voter suppression tactics to discourage voters from participating in the electoral process. The MS Civic Engagement Roundtable, lead by One Voice and the M.S. State Conference NAACP, has been working vigorously to address those concerns. The Roundtable, in collaboration with the Lawyer's Committee, hosts the Election Protection Program, which convenes during each election cycle.

During the 2020 Presidential Election, we launched a digital Election Protection Program. The toll-free line was activated on November 3, 2020, and ran through November 6, 2020. The program contained approximately 60 trained volunteers and a panel of legal experts responsible for monitoring and tracking voting issues. Volunteers consisted of Roundtable members, Mississippi NAACP branches, faith-based groups, grassroots organizations, members of Greek-letter organizations, local lawyers, and community members.

We documented calls from voters across the state of Mississippi using Zendesk, an online system used to answer and monitor calls. Information was also captured using the Our Vote Live database to track calls in real-time led by the Lawyers Committee. Voters raised a few concerns such as voter registration, types of identification accepted, machines malfunctioning, polling place access, voter intimidation, limited polling machines, and misinformation from election day workers. One issue that was a primary concern leading up to election day was the availability of curbside voting due to the national health crisis. On election day, we received a call from a voter in DeSoto County who was Covid-19 positive and wanted to vote curbside, but the voter was discouraged from visiting the precinct by a poll worker. However, according to *Parham v. Watson*, Mississippi voters experiencing symptoms of Covid-19 or who have been exposed to someone with the virus are expected to receive curbside accommodations at their precinct on election day.

Overall, the call center reported more than 500 calls from over 50 counties in Mississippi. Most questions and issues were from Hinds county, resolving over 100 calls from voters. Additionally, there were approximately 50 calls reported from Harrison County. We had partners across the state assisting in this effort to protect the vote by ensuring every vote counted. Furthermore, we are working to hold lawmakers accountable to improve those barriers experienced on election day.

Election Protection 2020

