

Integrated Voter Engagement

A Proven Model to Increase Civic Engagement

A Brief Definition Of **Integrated Voter Engagement**

Research has shown that nonpartisan Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE) is among the most effective ways to increase voter turnout. IVE groups train community members to reach out to their peers in a continuous, ongoing effort that increases the number of voters and leads to policy changes. The most effective IVE organizations add new people to the voter registration rolls, educate voters about election issues, make sure new and unlikely voters actually cast their ballots, and ensure that misinformation and intimidation don't inhibit people from voting. In addition, their work has a long-term impact by developing local leaders and involving people in shaping the public policy decisions that affect their lives.

Integrated Voter Engagement **Means Integration**

Successful IVE integrates voter engagement with ongoing nonpartisan issues and organizing or advocacy work. In IVE, issue campaigns build an organization's ability to reach out to potential voters, and voter engagement campaigns increase its ability to win issue campaigns. These activities are not unprecedented. Civic engagement groups have worked to increase voter participation for years, and issue organizing groups have developed leaders and won policy changes. What is new is that all these activities are being done by the same organizations in ways so that each activity strengthens and builds on the others. It is the integration that is new.

Integrated Voter Engagement **Produces Results**

IVE groups increase the number of voters from underrepresented and disenfranchised communities. Research shows that roughly 4.5 million people were registered by IVE groups and their allies over the last three election cycles, substantially increasing the number of new voters in states such as Florida, Nevada, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, North Carolina, and Texas. By bringing in new voters from underrepresented communities and keeping them engaged beyond election cycles, IVE groups change the political climate in cities and states, making new policy changes possible. For example, IVE groups have won minimum wage campaigns in 17 states and 15 municipalities, bringing more than \$3 billion per year to more than 5 million workers. IVE is an excellent investment for funders, producing significant results.

5 Characteristics

of Effective Integrated Voter Engagement Programs:

IVE programs differ from traditional nonpartisan voter engagement work in five key ways.

1 Staff and leaders are drawn **from the community**. Research has shown that the messenger is more important than the message in getting people to vote. People are more likely to listen to someone who is like them. IVE groups train and mobilize community members to talk to their peers rather than relying on paid workers from outside the community.

2 Election work is **ongoing and integrated** with issue work in a continuous cycle. The resources amassed during election organizing – voter lists, experienced staff and volunteer leaders, relationships with voters – help fuel issue campaigns. In turn, the energy, relationships, and community credibility won during issue campaigns help make voter engagement organizing more successful. IVE groups create a permanent infrastructure that works on both issue and electoral organizing, rather than expending resources to start over from scratch every two or four years.

3 IVE emphasizes **leadership development**. IVE groups view their base not simply as volunteers to mobilize for the current election campaign, but as potential leaders who will participate in both issue and voter engagement campaigns long into the future, with ever-increasing skills and abilities. IVE organizations invest in leaders, helping them succeed in progressively higher positions of responsibility, which builds skills for the leaders and capacity for the organization.

4 **Enhanced voter lists** focus voter work where it is most effective in reaching underrepresented communities. Technology is used to build and access the lists during elections. The lists and technology are then used outside of election cycles in ways that add information about each person in the database, keep addresses current and help maintain relationships with potential voters.

5 IVE not only increases voter participation, but also leads to **policy changes**. When previously excluded voters turn out in larger numbers, they and the elected leaders who represent them can wield greater influence in the policy arena. Effective IVE work helps shape public opinion on critical issues and leads to new policies and programs that better serve communities that have been previously underrepresented in the democratic process.

Integrated Voter Engagement

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A Case Study

Colorado Progressive Coalition

Voter Files and the Phases of Voter Engagement Work

This is a story about how the Colorado Progressive Coalition's Integrated Voter Engagement saved the day at the very last minute, helping to pass a critically important ballot measure.

In the mid-1990's Colorado passed the nation's strictest state spending limitation, the so-called 'Taxpayer Bill of Rights,' or TABOR. This bill cut spending and imposed arbitrary controls on the growth of state budgets, forcing the reduction or elimination of many public education, health and human service programs.

By 2005, TABOR had gutted the public sector, leaving roads unrepaired, public schools and universities underfunded, and scores of families without health insurance. The legislature, with the backing of business leaders, placed a measure on the ballot to roll back key provisions of the TABOR law. Only weeks before the election, the political and business supporters behind the TABOR rollback realized that their media-driven campaign did not have the momentum necessary to bring about a win, and they turned to the Colorado Progressive Coalition to bolster their strategies with a late but sizeable grassroots field campaign.

The TABOR rollback passed despite strong opposition, and local and national observers credit the Colorado Progressive Coalition, in addition to others, with making the difference. The Colorado Progressive Coalition knows its prior investment in Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE) made this achievement possible.

About CPC

Founded in 1996, the Colorado Progressive Coalition (CPC) includes 40 civil rights, faith-based, labor and community organizations, plus 5,000 individual activists and members in 80 towns and cities across the state. It is organized around five primary program areas – racial justice and civil rights, health justice, economic justice, statewide base building and civic engagement.

Over the past decade, CPC has become an outstanding practitioner of IVE, bringing issues together with voting, and emphasizing personal contact to engage disaffected constituencies and infrequent voters. CPC has also become a major statewide player, aiming to win responsive leadership and reorder the state's policy priorities. Says Maeghan Jones, former director of the Boulder-based Brett Family Foundation, "I look at Colorado Progressive Coalition and see a group that can set the issue context two years before an election."

CPC first dipped its toes in nonpartisan electoral waters in 2002, when it registered 1,800 and turned out 28,000 voters in racially diverse precincts in Denver, Aurora and Pueblo. CPC greatly increased the scale of its voter engagement efforts in 2004, when it registered 27,000 new voters, 90 percent of them African American and Latino, and reached 145,000 new or infrequent voters in 11 counties with voter education and mobilization efforts.

CPC's voter engagement work continued to build in 2006. A restrictive voter registration law (since repealed in a coalition effort led by CPC) made it extremely difficult and risky for CPC to engage in voter registration, but the coalition still knocked on 121,719 doors, made 26,684 voter engagement phone calls, and collected 36,386 signatures on a ballot measure to increase the minimum wage - more than any other group in the state. CPC's efforts were widely acclaimed as key to passing a constitutional amendment raising the minimum wage.

The Phases of Voter Engagement

CPC's work follows the phases typical of IVE groups, integrating all phases of voter engagement: registration, education, mobilization, and protection.

Voter registration occurs year-around at organizing events, fundraisers and other public events. In election years, voter registration efforts increase significantly typically in mid- to late spring, when CPC gets people who are not on the rolls to sign up to become eligible to vote. Like many IVE groups, CPC conducts its voter registration work in two ways: by going door-to-door, and by collecting registrations at sites where large numbers of people congregate, including bus and light rail stops, outdoor festivals, parents' events at schools, swearing in ceremonies for new citizens, and outside lesbian and gay clubs (the latter was particularly effective in 2006 when CPC opposed a ballot measure banning gay marriage).

Registering at events gives CPC large numbers of new registrants. Door-to-door registration is more labor-intensive and produces fewer new registrants, but it lays better groundwork for voter education and mobilization efforts, where repeated personal contacts lead to the best results. CPC focuses its door-to-door registration efforts in precincts with high percentages of low-income families and people of color.

CPC takes all voter registration forms back to its central office, where they are entered into a database. CPC has a 12-step process to check and recheck voter registrations to ensure the highest levels of integrity and accuracy. Voter registration continues until the registration deadline in October.

Voter education and mobilization start up a month after registration work begins. **Voter mobilization**, also known as Get-Out-The-Vote (or GOTV), is the process of making sure that new and low propensity voters actually go the polls (or fill out their mail-in ballots) and cast their vote. **Voter education** is the process of informing voters about the mechanics of voting (where and how to vote), why to vote, and what issues are at stake in the election. Non-partisan 501(c)(3) voter education work does not promote candidates or parties, but it can promote stands on ballot initiatives and give balanced information about candidates' positions on issues.

Voter mobilization and education work are tied together, usually occurring at the same time. Staff and volunteers go door-to-door, making sure people are registered, talking with them about issues and voting, and asking them to commit to vote. CPC also runs phone banks to contact voters who are hard to reach in person. The message of the education campaign often focuses on ballot initiatives, such as the measure to raise the minimum wage in 2006.

During the summer, CPC continues voter registration at high levels of intensity and voter education and mobilization at lower levels. Around Labor Day, the intensity switches, and voter education and mobilization become the central activities while voter registration continues at a reduced level – until the month before the voter registration deadline, when voters typically experience heightened motivation to register and the number of new registrants spikes. Overall, voter engagement work builds in intensity throughout the summer and fall as Election Day approaches. Since about a third of the electorate votes early in Colorado, CPC mobilizes voters throughout October, leading to a massive effort to call voters on Election Day.

The last phase of CPC's voter engagement work is **voter protection**: fighting against misinformation, intimidation, restrictive laws, and practices that make it difficult to vote. During off-election years, CPC works to reform and protect elections by supporting efforts by Common Cause and other organizations that prioritize these issues. In the weeks leading up to an election, CPC staff and volunteers give out information about voter protection hotlines and alert election protection groups to voter problems. Moreover, it was CPC that led the successful campaign to repeal the worst aspects of the 2006 law that made it difficult and risky for nonprofits to conduct voter registration drives.

In past years, CPC recruited and trained between 100 and 150 full and part-time electoral staff organizers from the communities it serves. These electoral organizers reached out to potential voters themselves and to a lesser extent recruited and trained community volunteers to do voter outreach. In the 2008 election cycle, CPC redesigned these efforts to depend more on volunteers and less on paid staff. Instead of registering and mobilizing voters themselves, the fifty electoral organizers hired by CPC focused on recruiting and training volunteers to be

neighborhood “captains” to manage the voter engagement effort in their precinct. CPC believes that this new methodology allows it to reach more voters and better positions the organization to win significant policy victories in non-election years. CPC is also making plans to provide more opportunities for election volunteers to be involved in issue campaigns in off-election years.

Former CPC co-director Bill Vandenberg¹ sums up CPC’s IVE work this way: “We use repeat contact – including face to face, neighbor to neighbor – and a culturally competent staff to reinforce the importance of elections and break down the intimidation factor for first-time or infrequent voters.”

Voter Files and Databases

IVE groups make use of computers to track and focus their voter contacts. Use of voter engagement databases is evolving in sophistication as groups become more savvy about technology and raise more money for hardware, software and technical support.

Voter database work starts with voter files, the official government lists of all registered voters in a given area. Voter files include basic information such as name, address, phone number, ward, precinct, and voting record (whether people voted, not whom they voted for). CPC purchased its first voter files in 2002, adding its own membership files and the membership files of its member groups to what then became its own voter file database. CPC uses this augmented voter file to print out walk lists for door knocking and call lists for phone banks. Information about new and old registrants is gathered from the phone banks and door knocking and entered back into the voter file. CPC also uses the database to track its voter contacts, so it knows how many times staff and volunteers have talked to each potential voter.

In the 2008 election cycle, as part of a national effort called State Voices, CPC joined with organizations around the country to switch from a less sophisticated computer database program to a program produced by the Voter Activation Network (VAN). In combination with Catalist, a leading provider of voter files and technical support to voter engagement groups, the VAN can do everything the previous program could do and more. In addition to the basic voter lists, Catalist provides demographic and consumer data and also includes people who are not registered to vote. All CPC volunteers and staff who go out to talk to potential voters carry handheld computerized ‘Palm Pilots’ that allow them to automatically update the database while out in the field. Working with Catalist and VAN also makes it easier for CPC to share voter information and coordinate its outreach activities with other Colorado voter engagement nonprofits so they do not duplicate efforts. The hardware (Palm Pilots), software (VAN and Catalist databases), and support are more expensive than the previous program, but they offer CPC much more sophisticated tools to advance its IVE work.

The next step for CPC will be using ‘microtargeting,’ a new tool for outreach and base building by 501(c)3 nonpartisan groups. Through the 2008 election cycle, CPC has used U.S. census information to select precincts with a high percentage of low income people or people of color. These whole precincts were the focus (or “targets”) of CPC’s voter outreach. CPC knows that this is a crude way to target its work. There are many voters within the targeted precincts that do not fit the profile for people that CPC is trying to reach, and there are some people outside of CPC’s target precincts that do meet that profile. In future election cycles, CPC hopes to use nonpartisan microtargeting to target individual potential voters rather than targeting whole precincts. If CPC can raise the funds, it will combine polling with commercial data to develop a computerized profile of the voters it most wishes to contact. CPC will then reach out to these voters to make sure they register and go to the polls.

CPC’s database and list technology will be particularly important as it seeks to implement a year-round door-to-door canvass, intended to maintain election momentum and increase grassroots mobilization capacity. The full-time canvass is a way to maintain a consistent and visible presence in CPC neighborhoods, expand membership, and maintain a pulse on community issues. By engaging community members in an ongoing dialogue, CPC is in a position to help them raise a progressive voice on local, state, and national policy issues. The canvass also plays the important role of providing young people of color with a formal and consistent opportunity for leadership development and entry-level job opportunities in community organizing and policy advocacy.

Outcomes of CPC’s Voter Engagement Program

Colorado is a state with ballot initiatives... lots of ballot initiatives. Colorado Progressive Coalition was in fact

founded in response to a trend toward increasingly punitive ballot measures. “It’s sad for Colorado ... that every election year needs a scapegoat,” said Vandenberg.

CPC’s biggest and most visible successes have been with ballot initiatives. In 2002, the first year of its voter engagement work, CPC supported successful efforts to defeat a measure to eliminate bilingual education.

In 2005, CPC’s IVE effort was central to passing a rollback of the TABOR bill that enforced extreme limits on government spending.

In 2006, CPC was the lead community organization in a statewide ballot measure campaign to raise the minimum wage. CPC collected the largest number of qualifying signatures among participating organizations, and conducted voter outreach and education throughout the state. The measure was among the hardest-fought minimum wage battles in the country, with the opposition spending approximately two million dollars. In the end, the measure was approved 53% to 47%. The Rocky Mountain News reported that the minimum wage measure “overcame heavy spending by the state’s restaurant industry” through an “intense grass-roots campaign [by unions and CPC] that targeted urban, lower-income unlikely voters.”

Vandenberg puts CPC’s Integrated Voter Engagement work into perspective: “The reason we do civic engagement work is to build power in order to impact broader social policy changes.” What is impressive is how successful the Colorado Progressive Coalition has been in such a short time.

Postscript 2008

In 2008, CPC focused on defeating a ballot initiative eliminating race and gender-based affirmative action programs. The measure was promoted by national anti-affirmative action activist Ward Connerly and had previously passed in California, Washington and Michigan. The Colorado Progressive Coalition and its allies won, and it was a historic victory. Colorado became the first state in the nation to defeat the affirmative action bans. While the measure led in the polls right up to Election Day, CPC continued intensifying its effort and knocked on roughly 10,000 doors during the final four days of its campaign. In the end, voters rejected the measure by a narrow 50%-49% margin of approximately 28,000 votes.

When asked how they were able to defeat the measure, CPC Organizing Director Lindsey Hodel said, “Good old fashioned door-to-door conversations and face-to-face speaking engagements were the key to success. Everything points to the face-to-face conversations.” The margin of victory was so narrow that literally every single tactic we used made a difference.”

By Lee Winkelman, based on research and writing by Jeff Malachowsky.

1-Bill Vandenberg is now the Director of the Democracy and Power Fund at the Open Society Institute.

LEGAL NOTES

1. Voter registration – Some funders who wish to support nonpartisan voter registration, in particular private foundations, need to follow special guidelines. One important rule specifies that private foundations can only fund voter registration drives conducted by certain public charities that work in at least 5 states (known in the tax code as ‘4945f organizations’). The registration groups featured in the case studies can all be supported through general support grants to the groups themselves, or through grants to 4945(f) organizations with which they are affiliated. In CPC’s case, this is the national organization US Action, State Voices and others. Foundations cannot “earmark” their grants to work in specific states.

2. Ballot measures and lobbying – Nonpartisan 501(c)3 organizations like CPC are legally entitled to conduct lobbying, within limits, including both work on ballot measures and advocacy around legislation. Funders who wish to support this work directly may face certain restrictions, and private foundations may not earmark grants for lobbying. Your tax advisor or legal counsel will be able to advise you on how best to support lobbying, and excellent resources are available on the FCCP’s website at www.funderscommittee.org. General support grants, while not earmarked for lobbying or any other activities, will also allow grantees to include advocacy and ballot measures among their programmatic activities.

3. FCCP represents a broad array of funders in the nonpartisan civic engagement funding community, including private foundations, public charities, and individual donors. These various legal entities are governed by a wide variety of legal structures and constraints, each with different capacity for supporting particular kinds of nonpartisan voter engagement work. These case studies describe a range of efforts, some of which may be inappropriate for certain funders, or may require special attention in grant agreements and work plans. As always, we suggest that funders interested in supporting this work, particularly private foundations that may face greater IRS restrictions, consult your tax advisors or legal counsel and consider making general support grants as the most flexible and effective means of funding.

FCCP

FCCP is a resource for the philanthropic community on a broad range of civic participation issues. It serves as a vehicle for identifying trends, sharing best practices, engaging strategic discussions, strengthening relationships and providing and identifying resources for the field. FCCP is a special project of Public Interest Projects.

FUNDERS' COMMITTEE FOR CIVIC PARTICIPATION

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A Case Study

The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Leadership Development and the Role of Immigrants in Integrated Voter Engagement

When the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) began its nonpartisan voter engagement work in 2004, a consultant advised the group to recruit people from out of town to conduct its voter outreach, because these out-of-towners would work around the clock without friends and family nearby to distract them. ICIRR took this advice in 2004 and was successful at one level: the organization registered 27,000 new immigrant voters.

But the day after the election, only two of the organizers remained in Chicago. When the rest left town, the skills they learned and the relationships they developed were no longer available to help advance ICIRR's issue campaigns and involve voters in future election cycles. ICIRR decided it would do things differently when the next election cycle rolled around. It had learned a basic principle of Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE): the most effective way to increase civic participation over time is for local people, not outsiders, to reach out to their peers.

About ICIRR

The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights is one of the preeminent organizations representing immigrant communities. Founded in 1986, ICIRR is a coalition of 160 groups in metropolitan Chicago, including health, human service, labor, community and ethnic organizations. It has a staff of 18 and a budget of \$2 million. ICIRR works at local, state, and national levels, addressing immigrant empowerment, citizenship, and integration issues.

Through its New Americans Democracy Project, ICIRR successfully engaged citizen immigrant voters in the 2004, 2006 and 2008 election cycles. By fall 2008, it had registered more than 78,000 new voters, and made contact with 95,748 voters of immigrant background. In addition, ICIRR helped 34,255 legal permanent residents fill out their applications to become U.S. citizens, contributing to a 56% increase in citizenship applications from the Chicago area.

In this case study, we will focus on two aspects of the organization's work: leadership development and the role of immigrants in IVE.

Immigrants and Voter Engagement

With more than 1.7 million foreign-born residents, representing approximately 20% of the city's population, Chicago is one of the top five U.S. metropolitan areas in terms of the size of its immigrant population. Moreover, Chicago's immigrants are a diverse group, coming from more than one hundred countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America. When you also count U.S.-born children of immigrants, the total immigrant family population is more than 3 million, roughly 37% of the metropolitan Chicago population.

ICIRR has become an acknowledged force in creating political power for Chicago's immigrant constituents through IVE. To succeed, ICIRR had to bridge the diversity of its immigrant communities, including differences in nationality, language, and economic and legal status. ICIRR's challenge was to unite immigrant communities despite their divisions, overcome feelings of powerlessness, and convert potential fissures or weaknesses into

actual strength. Under the inclusive overarching message “Participate – Become a Citizen – Vote,” ICIRR developed distinct voter engagement strategies in eight different languages aiming at four subsets of the immigrant community, each with differing legal status.

The first two groups that ICIRR targets are naturalized citizens and U.S.-born children of immigrants, because these groups are already eligible to register and vote. Naturalized citizens are likely to cherish their hard-won status and vote at higher rates than native-born citizens. ICIRR’s voter registration and mobilization efforts target the 700,000 naturalized citizens in the Chicago area. ICIRR’s voter education efforts target this group as well as the 1.5 million children of immigrants who are eligible to vote once they become 18 years old.

ICIRR’s third target group is the population of legal residents, who generally hold what are known as ‘green cards.’ ICIRR encourages and assists legal residents to apply for citizenship, offering citizenship schools that teach immigrants what they need to know to become citizens and eligible voters, and guiding them through the necessary steps and paperwork.

Lastly, ICIRR targets undocumented immigrants. The people in this group are often highly politicized and interested in fighting for basic rights, but they are politically invisible and insecure, and are not eligible to vote. To promote widespread participation without fear, ICIRR volunteers are not asked about citizenship status. Undocumented immigrants therefore feel free to volunteer in all ICIRR programs. Though not able to vote themselves, they encourage civic participation and citizenship among eligible family and community members.

Many immigrant families have members with differing immigration status living in the same home. ICIRR’s multi-pronged strategy enables it to interact appropriately with all members of a mixed status household. For instance, when ICIRR’s outreach workers come across legal permanent residents who can’t yet vote, they invite them to participate in the citizenship program. As Executive Director Joshua Hoyt explained, “The key to our election strategy is helping *legal permanent residents* become citizens, and mobilizing to vote *naturalized immigrants*, who are citizens, plus *U.S.-born children*, who are also citizens. If only one-third of immigrants can vote – why pay attention? But if taken together with their children, they number 2.2 million people eligible to vote – that’s a lot of voters.” The group’s IVE work, funded with both 501(c)3 nonpartisan and 501(c)4 lobbying dollars, has helped pass significant legislation, including the creation of a robust state program to promote citizenship and invest public resources in immigrant communities and organizations. ICIRR continues to help lead and strengthen this program.

Leadership Development

Learning from its first successful voter engagement effort in 2004, ICIRR realized it needed to train local people, not outsiders, to do voter contact work during the 2006 election. ICIRR recruited and trained 18 bilingual immigrants and children of immigrants as New American Democracy Fellows, who were based in local neighborhood organizations, mosques and churches. Rather than conducting all of the voter engagement work themselves, each fellow recruited and trained 50 to 100 immigrant community members. The community members formed door knocking teams in 15-20 different precincts where they registered new voters, educated new and infrequent voters about where and how to vote, and encouraged voters to go to the polls on election day. As a result, ICIRR and its member groups had 1,500 local voter engagement volunteers on the street in 2006.

All ICIRR fellows attended a week-long intensive program where they were trained in both community and nonpartisan electoral organizing principles and practices. The curriculum and some of the trainers were drawn from well-regarded organizing and electoral training groups, including the Midwest Academy, Wellstone Action, and the Center for Community Change. ICIRR staff met with the fellows regularly throughout the election cycle to provide follow-up training and support.

ICIRR ran a companion less-intensive training program called the Democracy School for 400 of the most promising volunteer leaders recruited by the fellows. For one full Saturday each month, these leaders received

training in nonpartisan electoral organizing and had opportunities to meet with elected officials. In exchange, leaders committed to volunteer for six hours each week on issue education or voter mobilization. These leaders became the volunteer backbone of the campaign, essentially working as area coordinators or precinct captains supervised by the Democracy Fellows.

This intentional focus on leadership development proved successful for ICIRR. With more and better-trained staff and leaders working with longer-term commitments to the community, ICIRR's voter engagement program in 2006 was very successful. For the immigrant rights movement this investment in leadership development was particularly striking and continued to pay off long after Election Day. Twelve of the 18 fellows continue to work as full-time organizers for immigrant groups in the area and more than half of the leaders who attended the Democracy School participated in ICIRR's post-election issue campaigns to advocate for federal comprehensive immigration reform and a state drivers' certificate bill. In addition, almost all the leaders who participated in the Democracy School continue to use their leadership skills in the community and religious groups from which they were recruited. These trained organizers and leaders put ICIRR at a significant advantage going into the 2008 election cycle.

Leadership development is one of the key characteristics that distinguishes Integrated Voter Engagement from other models of voter work. Mehrdad Azemun, ICIRR's Organizing Director, explained:

Leadership development is the lifeblood of any organization that is serious about justice. Helping leaders grow and learn new skills – doing that continuously and doing it well, and now integrating it into the electoral cycle – is crucial to what we do. It is the way that people realize the sense of their own power. It is how change happens.

Outcomes of ICIRR's Voter Engagement Program

The effectiveness of ICIRR's IVE program is manifest in the success the organization has had mobilizing voters, gaining visibility for key issues, winning policy victories for the immigrant community, and developing new organizational capacity.

By electoral measures alone, the New Americans Democracy Program yielded significant results. Fellows were held accountable for high performance goals, and registrations were collected door-to-door, at sites where members of the community congregated, and through family and community networks. ICIRR registered more than 27,000 new voters in 2004, and more than 16,000 in 2006 – a year without a presidential election and thus with less funding and community interest in voter engagement work. Detailed reporting for 2006 showed that ICIRR had 144,875 direct voter contacts in 357 precincts, more than 300 trained volunteer organizers and 1,552 all-day volunteers on Election Day, and 39 lawyers ready to solve voting problems. Turnout rose substantially in many of the immigrant communities where the program did its most intensive work. All of this work was nonpartisan.

Other measures further indicate the program's effectiveness. In the 30 months beginning in February 2005, ICIRR directly assisted more than 29,000 legal permanent residents in filing citizenship applications. In 2006, ICIRR trained more than 2,500 naturalization volunteers. It helped organize one of the largest marches in the country during the immigrant mobilizations in the spring of 2006. The group then organized a mass demonstration over Labor Day, leading marchers on a four-day trek from Chinatown to U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert's office outside of Chicago to urge him to support comprehensive immigration reform - and garnering four days of excellent press.

The success of ICIRR's voter engagement work contributed significantly to the organization's success in moving its issue agenda forward. For fifteen years ICIRR has worked on a bill to promote drivers' certificates to allow immigrants to drive and hold car insurance regardless of immigration status. For the first time, the bill passed the Illinois House in 2007, and came up just two votes shy in the Senate. Support for the bill is increasing,

and ICIRR hopes to see it pass soon.

More recently, through its combination of community and electoral organizing, ICIRR successfully advocated for legislation establishing the We Want to Learn English Initiative. Looking ahead, ICIRR will now shift its effort to winning \$25 million to fund the program.

ICIRR's voter engagement work helped change the political climate on immigrant issues in Illinois during a time when there has been a significant backlash against immigrants nationally. No anti-immigrant legislation has passed in Illinois in the last few years, while at the same time the state increased funding for citizenship, preschool and children's health care programs that include undocumented immigrant children, and a day labor protection act. The governor signed the groundbreaking New Americans' Executive Order, which created a proactive planning process for the integration of immigrants into the state's civic and economic life. There is a state-supported citizenship program. A local newspaper called Illinois "the most immigrant friendly state in the country."

Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL) explained the impact that ICIRR and its Integrated Voter Engagement program have had in Illinois:

During the past six years, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights has emerged as a vehicle for countless individuals to realize the American dream, by increasing immigrant naturalization opportunities, stimulating voter participation, and winning support for humane immigration policies. The results are helping us change the political landscape in Illinois every day and improve conditions for immigrants throughout the state.

Postscript 2008

In 2008, ICIRR expanded its immigrant voter engagement work. The group reported registering 25,804 new immigrant voters, targeting 144,277 immigrant voters in Get Out The Vote efforts, knocking on 212,091 doors, and making 57,831 phone calls, all in more precincts – 694 — than ever before. ICIRR organizers also made better use of voter databases, and improved training and support for the American Democracy Fellows.

According to Hoyt, "This was the first time the overall voter program was of such scale that elected officials really had to take it into account." U.S. Senator Richard Durbin attended a rally that kicked off ICIRR's election organizing campaign, and Mayor Richard Daley, state Attorney General Lisa Madigan, and U.S. Rep Gutierrez attended a rally in the week before the election. As SEIU's website Progressive Illinois described it, "This impressive roster is a testament to how ICIRR has outgrown its origins as a small coalition of Chicago nonprofits and emerged as an electoral force and a leader in the nation's immigration debate."

By Lee Winkelman, based on research and writing by Jeff Malachowsky.

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Integrated Voter Engagement

A Proven Model to Increase Civic Engagement

A Case Study

SCOPE

The Organizing/Electoral Cycle and the Role of Evaluation

1992 in Los Angeles is not remembered as the good old days. Festering race and class tensions led to days of violent upheaval, called 'riots' by some and rebellion by others. This social unrest spotlighted the problems of poverty, crime and unemployment facing Los Angeles' inner city communities. While there were agencies, advocacy and organizing groups working to combat these problems, often they did not work together, and they did not have enough power to effect real change. When you added up all the efforts to improve the lives of low-income Angelinos in 1992, the whole was substantially less than the sum of its parts. The uprising was a wake-up call for activists and reformers. Clearly, business as usual was not going to stop crime, reform a police force, or end poverty.

SCOPE traces its roots to the months following the 1992 social unrest, when community leaders decided that a new approach was needed. They began to organize in low-income communities of color with a new vision for the future and a stronger commitment to work together more strategically to achieve that vision.

Today, many years later, the political climate of the city has changed, and Los Angeles gets high marks as one of the U.S. cities most responsive to the needs and interests of low-income and disenfranchised communities. SCOPE, along with allied community groups and labor unions, played a key role in reshaping the city's political climate and implementing effective new government policies to address poverty, crime, police brutality and unemployment – the issues that sparked the 1992 civil unrest. SCOPE's Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE) work was essential to bringing about this transformation.

About SCOPE

Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE) is a grassroots organization practicing IVE, including community organizing, leadership development, alliance building, public education, policy advocacy, and nonpartisan electoral organizing.

SCOPE grew out of a membership organization based in South LA called AGENDA, or Action for Grassroots Empowerment and Neighborhood Development Alternatives. Today, SCOPE has several organizational components that give it the capacity to deliver cutting-edge research in support of its policy campaigns, to provide training to strengthen allied organizations, and to organize and develop leaders in two different Los Angeles neighborhoods. SCOPE also leads two alliances of IVE groups, one at the state and one at the national level.

The Organizing and Electoral Cycle

SCOPE and its predecessor AGENDA were rooted in neighborhoods of color, from which they worked to impact the regional urban economy. The organizations won a series of multi-year campaigns that have brought jobs to low-income communities of color where unemployment is endemic. Among many successes, in 1999 SCOPE and its partners reached agreement with the DreamWorks entertainment conglomerate to create a \$5 million jobs program. And in 2002, SCOPE convinced the city, unions, community-based organizations, employers, and service providers to jointly design, implement, and oversee the model Health Care Career Ladder Training Program, which has placed more than 900 low-income individuals into well-paying health care jobs, achieving a phenomenal retention rate of 84%, compared to a 55% national retention rate. Currently, SCOPE is

anchoring the Los Angeles Apollo Alliance, which pursues a far-reaching vision for an environmentally sound and sustainable economy and insists that inner-city residents gain their share of the new green jobs.

SCOPE won these campaigns by building a strong base in low-income communities of color, engaging in sophisticated research and policy work, developing strong and broad coalitions of unions, community groups, churches, and social service agencies, and developing the leadership skills and political experience of leaders within SCOPE and allied groups.

In 2001, SCOPE assessed its work and concluded that winning issue victories like the creation of job programs was not enough. The organization's leaders and staff concluded that to have more impact, SCOPE would need to change the political climate. At that time, it took SCOPE two years of organizing just to get policy makers to acknowledge that there was a problem, and then much more effort to get them to actually address the problem. SCOPE concluded that integrating a voter engagement program into its work might just make the difference.

Today, SCOPE's IVE work is considered a well-oiled machine. SCOPE bases its nonpartisan voter engagement work on its deep roots in the community. Staff members train community residents to go door-to-door in their neighborhoods, talking to their peers about why they should vote. SCOPE sets up "precinct teams," groups of leaders that oversee voter outreach to their neighbors. All voter contacts are tracked in a centralized database.

SCOPE staff and leaders organized in 26 precincts for two elections in 2006, making face-to-face contact with 5,341 voters for the November election. While this is an impressive number for a single organization, SCOPE knew that it was not enough to win the kind of political transformation it was seeking. To broaden its efforts, SCOPE, which is a 501(c)3 nonpartisan nonprofit, launched a regional 501(c)4 coalition of community organizations and unions called ALLERT (Alliance of Local Leaders for Education Registration and Turnout). Through ALLERT, SCOPE shares its power analysis and precinct organizing strategies with a host of labor and community organizations and churches. In 2006, the groups in the ALLERT network made direct, personal contact with voters in 300-400 precincts. The list of voters in the ALLERT database – organizational members plus others identified or contacted in campaigns – has grown from 5,000 to 344,000, highlighting the significant growth potential for the groups of a coordinated nonpartisan voter engagement approach.

SCOPE's voter engagement work is integrated into the overall work of the organization. The issue organizing and electoral organizing are done by the same staff and community leaders, and one type of organizing flows into the other and back again. The relationships and good reputation developed by SCOPE through its issue campaigns give the organization a head start when it comes time to ask people to vote, and the strict numerical goals and reporting required by electoral campaigns has brought a new rigor and discipline to setting goals for issue campaigns.

Both issue campaigns and electoral organizing are time-intensive efforts, particularly when done in isolation from one another. As a model of IVE, SCOPE engages in careful long-term planning to utilize its resources in a way that strengthens and reinforces both its issue and electoral organizing. During election cycles, precinct teams 'Get-Out-The-Vote.' These same teams conduct outreach and education to precinct residents to involve them in issue campaigns. When staff and community leaders reach out to their peers during election cycles, they are not only looking for potential voters; they are looking for potential leaders for all of SCOPE's work. In low-income neighborhoods where people move frequently, a voter list can quickly become obsolete between two-year election cycles. SCOPE uses its lists for both electoral and issue organizing, so the lists stay current. SCOPE has ongoing training sessions for community leaders, and these trainings have both electoral and issue components depending on the needs of the moment.

If SCOPE viewed its issue organizing and electoral organizing as ends in themselves, as has often been the case with community organizations, the two types of organizing would compete for resources. Instead, SCOPE views both electoral organizing and the issue campaigns as key elements of its larger strategy for political change.

Under this framework, SCOPE has the flexibility to shift its emphasis back and forth between the two types of organizing as strategy dictates.

Evaluation Informs IVE

Integrated voter engagement is most effective when it uses evaluation and research to inform and improve its work. SCOPE uses evaluation and research in a couple of different ways.

With generous support from the James Irvine Foundation, SCOPE has worked closely with social scientists from several universities to design and implement a scientific study of its methods. The academics helped SCOPE identify a ‘control group’ so that they could compare voters who did and did not receive SCOPE’s voter contacts. Some of the researchers’ conclusions supported what SCOPE organizers already knew: “campaigns should use face-to-face canvassing” and “canvassers should be well trained and drawn from local communities of interest.” Other conclusions ran counter to the ‘conventional wisdom’ of campaigns, and became useful when SCOPE sought to persuade its allies to redesign their voter outreach programs away from methods like computerized “robocalls,” direct mail, and door hangers that were highly popular but proved to be less effective. Still other findings improved SCOPE’s own effectiveness. For instance, when research revealed that door-to-door canvasses are more effective when they are done closer to the election, the organization changed its voter contact workplans and schedules. Overall, the researchers concluded that SCOPE’s IVE efforts raised voter turnout by 6.6% in its targeted precincts in the November 2006 election.¹

SCOPE also uses research to determine what kind of campaign messages will be most effective. The California Alliance, a statewide coalition anchored by SCOPE, is working to reform the state tax and fiscal systems that have placed severe limits on the possibilities for more equitable policies in California. Working with the social research firm American Environics, SCOPE and its allies are using polling to identify subsets of the population defined by particular values and priorities. These groups are assigned broad descriptive labels, such as “stable suburbans,” “responsible religious,” and “angry youth of color.” Additional polling is then used to identify the tax and fiscal reform messages that will most effectively motivate these constituencies. Research suggests these groups are not typically aligned with SCOPE’s values and priorities, but could be, so they have become SCOPE’s targets. The goal is to come up with a “strategic framework” by 2010 for a multi-year campaign to win systematic budget and tax reform. This intensive use of polling research to identify target populations, cultivate non-traditional allies, and design effective messages is promising – though still new — for community-based IVE organizations.

Outcomes of SCOPE’s Integrated Voter Engagement Program

SCOPE’s impact is clear and tangible. Turnout in the South LA neighborhoods where SCOPE is active, neighborhoods historically populated with low-propensity voters, has gone from 10-15% *below* the citywide average to now *equal or above* that average. The researchers “suspect that SCOPE’s many years of experience in organizing, and their long-time presence in the community, contributed to this success.”²

SCOPE’s integrated voter engagement work has been a factor in the transformation of the political climate in ways that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago. SCOPE issue campaigns have led to the creation of model programs that provide low-income minority residents with training and access to well-paying jobs. The city has adopted a living wage law, an ordinance that effectively stops low-wage big box stores like Wal-Mart from setting up shop, an anti-sweatshop policy, a municipal housing trust fund, and a landmark ‘green ports’ law that reduces port-related pollution and ensures that its jobs pay a living wage. It no longer takes SCOPE two years to get policy makers’ attention. Instead, elected leaders regularly attend SCOPE events and policymakers seek out their counsel. In one telling example, three of the most powerful political figures in the city – Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Ethics Commission Chair Gil Garcetti, and City Councilor Herb Wesson – all attended the launch of the Apollo Campaign, and each signed the Apollo statement calling for green jobs and a green economy. The issues and concerns of low-income and disfranchised people are much higher on the agenda of city government than they ever were before.

Thanks in part to the efforts of SCOPE and its labor and community allies, Los Angeles is changing. Scholars and journalists alike have credited the grassroots organizing and convergence of four social movements with fundamentally changing the power dynamics in LA – labor, immigrants, environmentalists, and community organizations like SCOPE. One recent book on Los Angeles, while warning about “many powerful forces...arrayed against reform,” described the transformation this way: “the next Los Angeles – a more socially just, democratic, and livable city – appears close.”

By Lee Winkelman, based on research and writing by Jeff Malachowsky.

1 - Professors Melissa R. Michelson, California State University, Lisa García Bedolla, University of California Irvine, and Donald Green, Yale University. *New Experiments in Minority Voter Mobilization*. September 2007. Published by the Irvine Foundation, www.IRVINE.ORG.

2 - Robert Gottlieb, Mark Vallianatos, Regina M. Freer, and Peter Dreier. *The Next Los Angeles: Struggle for a Liveable City*. University of California Press. 2005-6.

LEGAL NOTES

1. Voter registration – Some funders who wish to support nonpartisan voter registration, in particular private foundations, need to follow special guidelines. One important rule specifies that private foundations can only fund voter registration drives conducted by certain public charities that work in at least 5 states (known in the tax code as ‘4945f organizations’). The registration groups featured in the case studies can all be supported through general support grants to the groups themselves, or through grants to 4945(f) organizations with which they are affiliated. SCOPE’s case, this is the national Push-back Network and others. Foundations cannot “earmark” their grants to work in specific states.

2. Ballot measures and lobbying – Nonpartisan 501(c)3 organizations like SCOPE are legally entitled to conduct lobbying, within limits, including both work on ballot measures and advocacy around legislation. Funders who wish to support this work directly may face certain restrictions, and private foundations may not earmark grants for lobbying. Your tax advisor or legal counsel will be able to advise you on how best to support lobbying, and excellent resources are available on the FCCP’s website at www.funderscommittee.org. General support grants, while not earmarked for lobbying or any other activities, will also allow grantees to include advocacy and ballot measures among their programmatic activities.

3. FCCP represents a broad array of funders in the nonpartisan civic engagement funding community, including private foundations, public charities, and individual donors. These various legal entities are governed by a wide variety of legal structures and constraints, each with different capacity for supporting particular kinds of non-partisan voter engagement work. These case studies describe a range of efforts, some of which may be inappropriate for certain funders, or may require special attention in grant agreements and work plans. As always, we suggest that funders interested in supporting this work, particularly private foundations that may face greater IRS restrictions, consult your tax advisors or legal counsel and consider making general support grants as the most flexible and effective means of funding.

FCCP

FCCP is a resource for the philanthropic community on a broad range of civic participation issues. It serves as a vehicle for identifying trends, sharing best practices, engaging strategic discussions, strengthening relationships and providing and identifying resources for the field. FCCP is a special project of Public Interest Projects.

FUNDERS' COMMITTEE FOR CIVIC PARTICIPATION

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Funder Recommendations

Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE) is a fertile field for funders that can help strengthen grantmaking strategies, regardless of issue area, constituency, or geographic focus. Funders can improve their own success and build capacity for their grantees by following some general principles drawn from the case study research:

1

Fund IVE year round, every year. Effective IVE is a year-round effort, even in non-election years. Provide funding as early in election cycles as possible, and for more than one year whenever possible. Balance election year funding with non-election year funding. The best voter engagement capacity is built by two kinds of investments: one sustains a threshold level of staff and capacity, such as voter lists and precinct networks, so that assets don't need to be rebuilt from scratch for each election; the second allows groups to 'ramp up' and expand in order to tackle voter registration and outreach campaigns. Consider funding both kinds of capacity, both kinds of investments.

2

Provide general support. The most effective IVE organizations practice all of the elements of IVE – voter registration, education, Get-Out-The-Vote, voter protection, advocacy and policy change, and leadership development. Make sure your grant agreements and communications encourage, rather than discourage, IVE voter engagement. Recognize that nonprofits often have more difficulty raising funds for certain aspects of IVE (voter registration, for instance), than for others, and, if not making general support grants, target your funds to support those hard to fund areas if you can.

3

Encourage your grantees to do all civic engagement activities allowable under the law. 501(c) 3 nonprofits can take positions on ballot initiatives. They can lobby government bodies within certain limitations. They can educate their members on candidates' positions on the issues. Don't place more restrictions on your grantees than the law does. When appropriate, encourage your grantees to file for a 501(h) election that will permit them to do more lobbying under the law. The Funders' Committee on Civic Participation has resources for more information on activities permissible for 501(c) 3 nonprofits at www.funderscommittee.org.

4

Support the use of new technology by your grantees. Through the development of new technology, IVE groups are able to enhance the effectiveness of their voter lists, communication methods, research, training, and targeting. These new tools allow IVE groups to be more strategic and to target their outreach more efficiently. However, the technology can be expensive. Funders can provide support for technology upgrades, special training and subscriptions to large data providers, as well as cover the costs of grantees to participate in partnerships and coalitions.

5 Partner with your grantees in evaluation efforts. Support groups to assess their effectiveness, make real-time corrections when necessary, and share what worked and what didn't. Where possible, funders should support independent third-party research and evaluation, as it is often the best way to verify results, show areas for improvement, and ensure that resources are well-allocated and money is well-spent. Urge grantees to design their evaluation plans in the early phase of their activities and campaigns, rather than at the end. Accountability for results and for effective spending and stewardship of resources is best viewed as a partnership between grantees and funders. Empirical evaluation, combined with qualitative assessment, is a valuable learning tool for both grantees and their funders.

6 Support IVE efforts as they increase in scale. Reaching scale means achieving cost efficiencies and creating more opportunities to retain the expertise needed to be successful in the field. One way to scale up is for individual groups to reach more potential voters, become more effective, and acquire more sophisticated levels of skill and technology. Another way to scale up is through the coordination of individual groups at the local, statewide, and national levels. Coordinating and aggregating efforts – through tables, coalitions, or other structures – when done well – permits effective division of labor and territory among participating groups. It also allows groups to share specialized skills, technology and best practices.

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