



CASE STUDY I: NUMBERS MATTER

Access Strategies Fund (ASF) is a small, family foundation based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Fund envisions a Massachusetts where every individual and group in our society has the power, respect and resources to improve their lives, family and community and where diverse groups are driving policy at every decision-making table.

Prior to the 2010 Census then director Kelly Bates noted that Census counts would be used to determine how some \$400 billion in annual federal spending would be allocated. She realized this was an issue with consequences for all of her grantees, particularly those working in historically marginalized communities.

Kelly learned that each person counted by the census would result in some \$2,000 annually in federal money to the state for hospitals, schools, job training, public works and emergency services. These services were desperately needed in the minority, low-income and immigrant communities ASF focused on, and precisely those communities that had been hit especially hard in the economic downturn.

At the same time, Kelly began reaching out to her colleagues and found out that not a single funder or organization in Massachusetts was organizing around the census. Despite all of these important consequences, the census simply wasn't on anyone's radar. Kelly was determined to change that.

Access Strategies Fund moved quickly to gather local and state funders to talk about the census, outlining how the information gathered would benefit the communities they were so deeply committed to serving. Funders soon decided that a collaborative fund would be the best way to move forward and created Access Strategies Fund's **Massachusetts Census Equity Fund (MCEF)** as a two-year project. The fund, comprised of Access and 11 other foundations, raised \$1 million dollars to provide grants and resources to 30 nonprofits working to ensure an accurate count of underserved communities in Massachusetts in the 2010 Census.

MCEF was successful in both the amount of money raised and its impact. Census participation increased 10 percent in Roxbury, the largest African-American community in Boston. Census counts in Massachusetts also rose in immigrant and low-income communities throughout the state due to the work of MCEF grantees. This accurate demographic data allowed federal, state and local resources to be more equitably distributed across Massachusetts. Members of MCEF said it was the most exciting collaborative they had ever been a part of.

MASSACHUSETTS CENSUS EQUITY FUND:

12 foundations granted
\$1 million to 30 nonprofits that
boosted participation among
marginalized communities in the
2010 Census helping to secure
their fair share of public resources

CASE STUDY II: REPRESENTATION MATTERS

There's more to the story. This was just the beginning of a broader commitment by Access Strategies Fund that addressed the kind of political under-representation illustrated by the data from WhoLeads.Us that we saw earlier. Access Strategies Fund helped ensure underrepresented groups had a much stronger voice in decisions affecting their communities by providing them with tools, resources and funding to take on issues of redistricting and voting.

On the other side of the country, a funder network that includes public charities and family, private and health care foundations in California is working toward a similar goal. The focus of the funder group, called California Civic Participation Funders, is to provide sustained support to local organizations working to increase civic participation among historically disenfranchised, people-of-color communities.

Orange County is one of four counties targeted by the funders. The county is a textbook example of a place where major demographic shifts have not been reflected in the data on voter participation and civic engagement. In 2012, for example, white people made up 43 percent of the county population, but they represented 64 percent of all registered voters. This has helped ensure that the county's elected leadership largely reflects the interests of affluent white residents.

It's because of this at-large system that Anaheim — despite a population that became more than 50 % Latino and 15 % Asian by 2010 — still had an all-white city council.

Adding to the representation deficit for people of color are structural hurdles built into the political system. For example, before 2014 Anaheim was the largest city in California to cling to a system of at-large voting, where all candidates contest in citywide elections rather than in smaller districts they run to represent. It's because of this at-large system that Anaheim

— despite a population that became more than 50 percent Latino and 15 percent Asian by 2010 — still had an all-white city council. Many council members lived in the upscale area of Anaheim Hills. A regular complaint among non-white residents was that the city was discriminating against those who lived in the heavily Latino neighborhoods known as the flatlands.

"The lack of representation has been really hard," said one resident. "I go around our city, and some parts look better than others. They have better libraries, better community centers, better parks. Why don't we have that chance to have more quality of life?"

Fighting for better services for people of color and low-income residents had been central to the work of Orange County groups receiving core support from **California Civic Participation Funders**. From the start, the funder collaborative set out to support these organizations to work more collaboratively and to focus on civic engagement as a key strategy for building voice and power among the communities they served. The funders provided the organizations with resources to facilitate collective planning, improve their capacity for deeper civic engagement, develop new leaders and new skills, and "tech up" to be able to mobilize more people to become engaged in the democratic process.

The community groups quickly came to see that changing the at-large system in Anaheim would be a powerful rallying point for their work, as well as an important strategy for increasing political representation for people of color. The groups enlisted the support of the ACLU to file a lawsuit against the city; they argued that the at-large election system violated the state's Voting Rights Act. Pressured by the lawsuit, in January 2014 the Anaheim city council agreed to put a measure on the ballot to create an at-large system.

Using the relationships, skills and capacities built over several years with funding from California Civic Participation Funders, the groups swung into gear to promote the ballot initiative, along with their 501(c)(4) sister entities.¹ In November 2014, turnout in heavily Latino and Asian communities in the city of Anaheim was up 26 percent, thanks to a coordinated Get Out the Vote drive targeting those communities. The increased turnout is credited with helping to secure voter approval of the measure, which added two new council seats and cleared the way for broader representation for the city's Latino and Asian residents.

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What does all of this mean for Anaheim's long-underrepresented residents? It means there is now a chance that the city council will start addressing what their communities most need: safe streets, high-quality libraries, places to gather and places for their children to play. This was never a partisan fight but simply a fight to ensure that all voices in the city could be heard. And that's the essence of civic engagement.

¹ The (c)(3) organizations continued work on the ballot measure under permissible 501(h) limits.