



VOTE, ORGANIZE, TRANSFORM, ENGAGE

*New Frontiers
in Integrated Voter
Engagement (IVE)*

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Executive Summary

■ A California Story for a Changing Nation

As the nation looks ahead to the 2020 elections, California is at last part of the national narrative. Not only is it home to several presidential candidates, it is now an early voting state in the primaries and a critical part of the electoral-college equation to get to 270. Moreover, the issues and values that drove the state to be an early leader of the resistance in countering rightward swing of the federal administration—expanding healthcare coverage, addressing climate change, and protecting rights of immigrants—are shaping the national policy debate.

But there is another reason why the nation should have its eyes on California. It was only a few decades ago that it led the rightward swing of national politics and discourse. In 1994, voters approved Prop 187 in attempt to block undocumented Californians from accessing public benefits. The state’s electorate also passed a draconian “three strikes” law that sent nonviolent offenders to a life in prison and fueled mass incarceration. The list of unsavory ballot measures goes on: In 1996, Prop 209 ended affirmative action. In 1998, Prop 227 banned bilingual education in schools. In 2000, Prop 21 made it legal to try juveniles as adults.

Of course, the demographic shifts, political polarization, and economic anxieties that fueled this series of “racial propositions” in California are the same that we are seeing nationally. But California has shifted dramatically and so may offer instructive lessons for a nation uneasy with change. Structural reforms—around term limits, redistricting, and fiscal governance—and changes in political leadership certainly helped shift the political calculus. But remember that while it may been political opportunists who proposed the “racial propositions,” it was voters who passed them. And so of equal importance in California’s dramatic shape-shift has been a patient and disciplined approach from leadership of communities of color who got tired of getting beaten up at the ballot box and got organized—and from a set of funders who supported the work and studied their approach.

It began modestly. In 2009, eight grassroots organizations launched their first statewide voter engagement program with a collective goal of contacting 100,000 voters. Fast forward ten years: there is a “Million Voters Project” (MVP) aimed at organizing a bloc of one million consistent voters that brings together seven statewide and regional community alliances that together include 93 affiliates deploying members and leaders in 26 counties working multiple election cycles and year-round. At this scale, the alliance can tip elections not only to defeat harmful initiatives or to protect gains but also to put forth bold proposals.

Their strategy, termed **integrated voter engagement (IVE)**, connects the short-term, cyclical work of voter education, outreach, and mobilization to the year-round work of organizing communities, developing grassroots leadership, and waging campaigns. They approach elections as milestones in a movement-building strategy. They are just as focused on reaching voters between elections as they are during elections—and they are determined not just to tip the vote for electoral gains but also to transform the electorate and reshape notions of citizenship and civic participation among those whose voices are often suppressed or overlooked.

While conventional electoral campaigns focus on swaying those who are likely to vote, IVE organizers are focused on changing who votes. They are doing so by engaging new and infrequent voters, motivating them to vote consistently, and getting them to show up for local policy battles as well. And there is a geographic roadmap: In the counties that usually vote in favor of progressive policies, what is needed is increased turnout among groups' base communities (low-income, immigrant, and young voters of color). In conservative regions of the state, new and infrequent voters need to both be moved to support progressive issues as well as be motivated to vote.

And the wins have come: Proposition 30 restored direly-needed funds for public education; Propositions 55 extended Proposition 30's income tax increase to stabilize budget flows; Proposition 56 increased the cigarette tax; and Propositions 47 and 57 made strides in redirecting resources away from mass incarceration and towards necessary social services. Building power at the ballot box has also translated into legislative victories. Established through AB 693, California's Solar on Multifamily Affordable Housing program allocates one billion dollars for rooftop solar installations on multifamily affordable housing in low-income communities. And while electoral efforts to reinvigorate rent stabilization stumbled in 2018, organizers were able to pivot to AB 1482 in 2019, legislation passed by the California legislature that puts a statewide cap on rent increases and provides protections to millions of renters.

Locally, decision makers are taking serious notice. Prior to engaging in IVE, groups with robust organizing efforts could demonstrate the support of hundreds or thousands of individuals. Now, they can demonstrate the support of hundreds of thousands of individuals. As a result, groups have won funding for housing for people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles. In Kern County, the Board of Supervisors voted against an anti-immigrant, non-sanctuary resolution supported by the sheriff. Successful citywide campaigns for minimum wage increases eventually paved the way for a statewide minimum wage increase.

2020 marks an important moment. The state has moved up its primary election to March so will likely be playing a larger role in the national debate. Within the state, a broad coalition has its sights on a statewide ballot measure to reform Proposition 13 and direct much-needed revenue to schools and neighborhood services. The kind of civic engagement and

organizational development IVE has helped to stir will also be critical to ensure a full and complete count for the 2020 U.S. Census. And yet, 2021 will be just as important: IVE shows us to focus not just on these electoral moments but the moments after the moment. So what is needed is a field and funders who understand the model, support the work, and see how crucial it can be to renewing the California Dream for all.

■ Report Overview

What happens in California can offer possibilities and pathways forward for a nation experiencing unease. After all, the demographic change in California presaged the nation's change while the economic shifts in the Golden State also signal, for better or worse, America's economic future. Getting policies that secure a more prosperous and inclusive California is critical for the state, but it is also instructive for the nation. And getting that future right—or at least true to community needs—requires a mobilized set of constituents who know what they want and know how to change the power calculus to get it.

This report highlights lessons from a decade of building that civic capacity in a state that is diverse—demographically, geographically, and politically. We argue that IVE has been critical to social change by both demonstrating the reach of community actors and animating voters to check out a town hall, show up at a community meeting, and otherwise do the civic work that often gets ignored by political pundits and consultants who focus on elections. We suggest that California's experience with IVE offers lessons for other state-based efforts, funders, academics, and strategists who are looking for effective ways to restore democracy, justice, and inclusion. And we suggest that we need to support understanding of, dialogue about, and, hopefully, collective action to strengthen the field of IVE as important battles are coming up in cities, counties, and districts across the state.

In putting this report together, we did our usual drill: We both scoured the literature and we interviewed organizers. We drew from the authors' experiences in the field and from partnerships with California Calls, PICO California, The California Endowment, and The James Irvine Foundation. Along the way, we did what has become a standard practice for us: We held a convening, in this case, virtual, to “ground-truth” our initial findings with organizers and to gather input on recommendations.

Note that this report is primarily focused on 501(c)3-funded work and thus omits a critical part of the picture: the increasing tendency of groups to also develop a 501(c)4 strategy. 501(c)4s and other structures allow constituencies to exercise a greater amount power by getting involved in the nomination and election of candidates and the development and qualification of ballot initiatives. Yet, as this report demonstrates, there is still a significant impact that

non-partisan voter education, outreach, and turnout can have on the trajectory of a state.

California is just one of several states—among them Ohio, Texas, Virginia, Arizona, and Florida—where grassroots organizations are employing IVE as part of a strategy to build the kind of power and influence that can shape both government and governance at a state level. In this sense, California is part of a broader movement to develop a new set of relationships between local and statewide work as well as between electoral and movement work. While in many of these cases, including in California, there is an important story about new partnerships between community and labor, this report focuses on the community organizing-led experiences and experiments testing a theory about what is needed to make real the California Dream for all.

■ Key Takeaways

There are four themes from the Golden State IVE story that we think are relevant for Californians and non-Californians alike—and that we hope are easy to remember given its appropriate acronym: vote, organize, transform, and engage (VOTE). Taken together, these themes capture why groups employ IVE as a power-building strategy, what they are able to accomplish by harnessing IVE as part of their broader movement building, and the nuts and bolts of how they implement IVE. We think that this frame offers different pathways to expanding the IVE ecosystem depending on an organization’s particular goals and priorities—and that this may be a helpful lens through which to read the full report:

VOTE—A focus on **tipping points, turnout, and technology** in order to have **decisive influence** on closely-contested electoral outcomes and to leverage that influence for **bolder proposals** that reach beyond what is winnable and towards the kind of **change that is needed**.

ORGANIZE—A stress on rooting the work in an ecosystem of **local grassroots organizing** groups committed to **developing leaders** to engage voters, **recruiting** voters to become **members**, and **bridging local-state work**.

TRANSFORM—A vision for governance by transforming **who votes**, the **issues they vote on**, and **redefining notions of citizenship** and civic participation among those who are or have been excluded from voting.

ENGAGE—A commitment to engaging voters **year-round and between election cycles**, engaging the **most impacted** communities and constituencies, and not only addressing **issues that they care about** but also **challenging beliefs and biases that divide** communities.

VOTE:

Tipping Points, Turnout, and Technology

For those interested in swaying electoral outcomes, the California case demonstrates the power of disciplined analysis (to set goals and measure progress) and equally disciplined evaluation (to track outcomes like voter contacts and opinions). In the Golden State, the Million Voters Project (MVP) is harnessing the power of seven statewide and regional community networks and its 93 affiliates to deploy members and leaders across 26 counties to turn out one million new and infrequent voters—a scale at which they can not only tip elections or defeat harmful initiatives but also put forth bold proposals. This pursuit of turnout to hit a key tipping point requires analysis of exactly where the crucial vote count needs to be—and it requires technology. Predictive dialing systems—a calling system that automatically dials from a list of phone numbers—have given organizations the ability to contact thousands and tens of thousands of voters to get out the vote. Organizations have also been able to build their own voter data files that are tailored to their local organizing and advocacy work and that help surface what the community’s priorities and concerns are. Calls to voters become a way to poll priorities and positions—and groups can bring that data to draw the attention of policymakers.

But using voter files, determining the universe of voters to contact, tracking outcomes, and using tablets require technical assistance and support. Predictive dialers cannot operate within the existing technological infrastructure at many organizations—and amping up systems requires computers, cell phones, tablets, laptops, wiring, and internet that can sustain 20 simultaneous phone bankers. Accordingly, implementing IVE, for many, requires an infrastructural overhaul, such as installing T-1 lines that increase internet and phone-related capacities. Furthermore, all this new technology creates the need for staff capacity to install and maintain these systems and equipment. This is especially challenging given how small organizations already tend to lack basic infrastructural needs such as phones, laptops, reliable internet, and even space for phone banks.

ORGANIZE:

Anchoring in Grassroots Organizing, Leadership Development, and People Power

Traditional get-out-the-vote (GOTV) operations often recruit canvassers from outside a community and deploy them as a temporary field army. In IVE, grassroots organizations are focused on cultivating members to lead the work as canvassers and phone bankers either as temporary paid staff or as volunteers. Even people excluded from voting, including undocumented residents and youth under age 18, can get involved to encourage others to vote. Local leaders and members play an important role as messengers who can sway their



neighbors and peers. They are effective because they usually have a message that resonates. For those making a foray into civic engagement for the first time, participating in IVE introduces them to the building blocks of organizing skills—such as persuading voters, framing challenging issues, managing data, public speaking, and coordinating teams. By involving leaders through multiple cycles, canvassers are able to become team leaders who manage phone banks or volunteer walk programs. In some cases, leaders have gained such valuable skills that organizations hire them into full-time staff positions or campaign managers recruit them work on an electoral campaign.

In order to meaningfully fold voters into an active base of members and leaders, organizations need capacity that goes beyond the electoral cycle: They want their members and constituents to vote, and they want them to become full participants in civic life. This requires follow-up capacity to keep people

engaged. The challenge for the field is that funding tends to fall short specifically during follow-up—the period where organizations perhaps need even more resources to engage people in depth. For some, the tradeoff means that they would prefer to have a smaller electoral turnout but have a larger contingent of residents and activists who have a deeper well of knowledge around the power dynamics, contexts, and goals of campaigns. But since this level of engagement is critical to maintaining a consistent and active base—which can hold elected officials and others accountable during implementation of more progressive policies—it makes great sense for funders to consider amplifying resources for such sustained engagement.

TRANSFORM:

Who Votes, How They Vote, and Beyond the Vote

With a focus on low-income voters, young voters, Black, Latino and Asian Pacific Islander communities, and immigrants and refugees, the IVE field in California seeks to transform the electorate to reflect the state's diversity. A wide disparity exists between who lives in California and who is making decisions at the ballot box. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, 58 percent of the state's adults are people of color, but people of color constitute only 42 percent of the state's likely voters, with similar chasms of

representation along the lines of income. While animating non-voters to vote is critical, so is bridging geographic divides between regions that lean progressive and those that are more conservative. To address these challenges, Million Voters Project partners and affiliates have been employing a two-part strategy. One focus is on increasing turnout among constituencies (women, people of color, young folks, low-income and working class families) in counties that usually sway progressive, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco Bay Area, and Santa Clara. The second focus is on motivating new and infrequent voters both to support progressive policies and to vote consistently in shifting or battleground regions of the state (Inland Valley, San Diego County, Kern, Fresno, Ventura, and Sacramento).

To keep new and infrequent voters engaged, groups run civic engagement programs year-round and in non-election years. The needle of engagement and support for progressive issues are rising among voters who have been repeatedly contacted over the years. Each in-person conversation or phone call serves as a form of political education. Over time, voters are gaining a better grasp of the issues which translates into their support. Groups are also experimenting with a range of activities and approaches. Some groups have neighborhood team leads who help with the ongoing follow-up and engagement in between electoral cycles. Town halls, forums, and cultural events are ways to engage voters beyond the ballot box. In fact, the work is really about reshaping what civic engagement looks like. Instead of treating people as passive recipients of government programs and policies, it makes them active agents in governance—in the process, redefining the very notion of civic engagement and the role of residents in democracy.

ENGAGE:

Voter Engagement, All Year, in All Years

Integrated voter engagement tries to reverse a cycle of alienation with year-round engagement of residents from the most vulnerable and impacted communities. After all, policymakers are often disconnected from those constituents—low-income communities, young people, immigrants, refugees, Native communities, and LGBTQ individuals and families—who face the most challenging circumstances and can experience most acutely the detrimental consequences of policies that come up short. But the process repeats itself: When elected officials do not feel the pressure to address the issues that such constituents care about, people and communities can grow sour on the political process and disengage in ways that further limit their influence. This lets decision makers off the hook—and they continue ignoring the communities and their concerns.

Organizers are disrupting that cycle by engaging communities in the political process so that their voices and concerns can be heard. The long-term goal is to cultivate voters to become

part of a larger base of residents aligned around racial, economic, immigrant, educational, and health justice. Getting there requires building power, but it also necessitates addressing internal divisions about how to approach homelessness, LGBTQ rights, and a myriad of other issues. Generating a greater awareness and understanding of intersecting issues requires challenging the beliefs and biases that divide communities. Progressive alliances cannot be assumed; they must be built through the hard work of political education, difficult conversations, and alignment around values.

■ Renewing the California Dream

It has been almost two decades since grassroots organizations in California made a decision to shift from defense to offense, from opposition to proposition, from losing elections to garnering the power to win. To do this, they pioneered a year-round, grassroots approach that blends movement building with electoral organizing. Such integrated voter engagement (IVE) gets out the vote more effectively while also leveraging voting as a sort of first step to the more robust civic engagement that can truly challenge economic, racial, and environmental inequality.

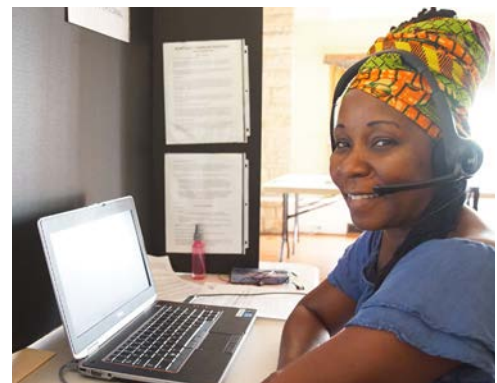
The approach has resulted in a significant number of policy victories and structural reforms at all levels of government and on multiple issues. Equally impressive has been the oversight and intervention in the implementation of policy victories. But perhaps what is most striking is what one interviewee calls a “cycle of wins.” As victories directly address the community’s needs, such as funding for housing or an increase in minimum wage, grassroots members become more motivated to engage. If we can achieve this at scale, the state will be able to move from a cycle of alienation to a self-reinforcing pattern of community power and influence.

This raises an important aspect not usually captured by traditional evaluations or political analyses: A win is not just about the policy victory. A win is also about the intangible and transformative impact on individuals who come to believe in their own power and understand that they will only truly be powerful in concert with others. A win is about moving someone to consider the issues of others and to take action as strongly as they would on their own issues. So while IVE is designed to impact the policy landscape, it is important to note that it has also been crucial to the sort of movement building that can disrupt the current constellation of power and spur the state to move to a future more inclusive of all Californians.

2020 marks an important movement moment: A broad coalition has its sights on a statewide initiative to reform Proposition 13 and direct much-needed revenue to schools and neighborhood services. It is an effort that IVE groups have been preparing for and building toward for over a decade—and it will face a fierce and well-funded opposition. The fight will likely be out of proportion to the tax take and revenue gain at stake; all sides understand the symbolic value of altering or affirming Proposition 13. Sold to the voters over 40 years ago as a populist tax revolt, it stripped away resources needed to invest in the next generation of Californians just as the state’s demography was shifting. Reform now could signal our state’s commitment to its more diverse present and future.

Key to winning that battle—to reinforcing the role of the public sector in providing individuals, families, and communities the support they need to thrive—will be an even more robust commitment to engaging new and occasional voters. Such a win would further signal that the use of racial undertones, anti-government rhetoric, and appeals to individual insecurity—which were so important to California’s “racial propositions” in the 1990s and to the populist polarization gripping America today—will no longer get in the way of a serious discussion of our shared economic and social needs.

That is a narrative and policy shift worth fighting for, and IVE will be one of the main tools community organizers will use to carry out that fight. After all, many in the nation are looking to California, wondering how we have been able to combine a strong economy with a concern for the climate and a new and more open approach to addressing long-standing racial and economic inequalities. One secret weapon has been the expansion of democracy: When more people are heard, better results are had. To tackle the next set of challenges—to move from a housing crisis to the end of homelessness, from income insecurity to an age of abundance, from mass incarceration to mass liberation—California must become not just a state of resistance but also a state of renewal. And investing in the VOTE—voting, organizing, transformation, and engagement—will get us one step closer to that California Dream.



Introduction

■ A California Story for a Changing Nation

In the 1990s, California led the rightward swing of politics and discourse. In 1994, voters approved Prop 187 in an attempt to block undocumented Californians from accessing public benefits. The state’s electorate also passed a draconian “three strikes and you’re out” law that sent nonviolent offenders to a life in prison and fueled already accelerating mass incarceration. In 1996, Prop 209 ended affirmative action; in 1998, Prop 227 banned bilingual education in schools; and in 2000, Prop 21 made it legal to try juveniles as adults. With every gloomy election, organizers would drop their local policy campaigns to run losing battles aimed at beating down regressive propositions.

Frustrated by the results, grassroots organizations started exploring ways to blend voter mobilization with their on-going organizing efforts—soon labeled “Integrated Voter Engagement” (or IVE to the acronym lovers amongst us). It was aimed at garnering enough power and influence to shift from playing defense to playing offense. By the early 2000s, exploratory conversations resulted in agreements to form alliances and build shared infrastructure to increase their capacity to mobilize voters. Mobilize the Immigrant Vote (MIV) was founded in 2004 as a multi-ethnic coalition of organizations based in immigrant communities. California Calls, now comprised of 31 local organizations that anchor the IVE work in 12 counties, started in 2003 with eight organizations based in Los Angeles, the Bay Area, San Jose, and San Diego.

Fast forward ten years: There is a dynamic ecosystem of community-based organizations and alliances engaged in IVE. Power California, formed by the merger of MIV and YVote, organizes an alliance of 29 organizations working together to engage young voters in Black, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander, and Native communities¹. PICO California, which has a relational organizing model to increase civic engagement, encompasses 13 non-profit organizations of 480 interfaith congregations, schools, and neighborhood institutions². Filling out the ecosystem are regional tables like Bay Rising, Engage San Diego, Inland Empowerment, and Orange County Civic Engagement Table.

The Million Voters Project (MVP) has now emerged as a powerful alliance of alliances. It includes Power California, PICO California, California Calls, Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), Asian Pacific Islanders for Civic Empowerment, Coalition

¹ “Power California Alliance,” Power California, <https://powercalifornia.org/partners>.

² “Our Federations,” PICO California, <http://www.picocalifornia.org/our-federation>.

for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA), and the Orange County Civic Engagement Table. It is a multi-year effort to build and amplify “an increasingly collective, organized, proactive voice of grassroots community-based organizations working in communities suffering most from injustices” with the goal of mobilizing a consistent bloc of one million voters around progressive issues³.

Groups chose to align because no one community organization could ever amass enough power to be considered equals with labor union leaders, political party leaders, donors, and others. Banding together, they created community-based power at scale in order to be taken seriously. To shape the political agenda and discourse, a broad and deep constellation of regional and statewide alliances is necessary, especially given the vast size of the state.

Recent electoral victories on a full range of issues that directly impact low-income communities of color—criminal justice, education justice, immigrant rights, environmental justice, healthcare access—are indicators of how these organizations have been successful in shifting the political dynamics within California. Take just a few examples—from Proposition 30, which restored direly-needed funds for public education, to Propositions 47 and 57, which made strides in redirecting resources towards necessary social services away from mass incarceration that wreaked havoc on Black and brown communities.

Building power at the ballot box has also translated into legislative victories. For example, AB 693 established California’s Solar on Multifamily Affordable Housing program, which allocates one billion dollars for rooftop solar installations on multifamily affordable housing in low-income communities. And while electoral efforts to reinvigorate rent stabilization stumbled in 2018, organizers were able to pivot to AB 1482 in 2019, legislation passed by the California legislature that puts a statewide cap on rent increases and provides protections to millions of renters.

Locally, decision-makers are taking serious notice. Even the strongest organizing groups who could demonstrate the support of hundreds or thousands could not get the level of attention from city leaders that they wanted. Now they can demonstrate the support of hundreds of thousands of voters in key districts and jurisdictions. In Kern County, that show of support was successful in pushing the Board of Supervisors to vote against an anti-immigrant, non-sanctuary resolution supported by the sheriff. Groups have also been able to counter the loud but few NIMBY voices to win funding for housing for those experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles.

2020 marks an important moment. The state has moved up its primary election to March so will likely be playing a larger role in the national debate. A busy election year is further complicated by a concerted effort to ensure a full and complete count for the 2020 U.S. Census. In an effort where every person counts, the shift to an online platform, the fear

³ “Who We Are,” Million Voters Project, millionvotersproject.org/about.

instilled by the proposed citizenship question, and the scale and diversity of California's population will make this a particularly challenging year.

2020 is also an important movement moment: A broad coalition has set its sights on a statewide initiative to reform Proposition 13 and direct much-needed revenue to schools and neighborhood services. It is an effort that IVE groups have been preparing for and building toward for over a decade—and it will face a fierce and well-funded opposition.

But as critical as 2020 will be, these fights are not even the pinnacle of what is needed to renew the California Dream for all. While political analysts and pundits focus on the horse race, communities are concerned about their daily realities. If we really want to improve the lives of all Californians, we need to focus not just on these electoral moments but the moment after the moment. In this sense, 2021 will be just as important as 2020.

To set the stage for this report, we return to Proposition 13: Over forty years ago, it was sold to the voters as a populist anti-tax revolt when, in fact, its roots were based in suburban, racist sentiment. Fueling this first in a series of “racial propositions” in California all the way through the 1990s were a set of trends—demographic shifts, political polarization, and economic anxieties—that we are now seeing nationally. So what has happened in California can offer possibilities and pathways forward for a nation at unease—and that is what we offer in this report.

■ A Roadmap to the Report

This report is intended to support dialogue and understanding between organizers, funders, researchers, and intermediaries. The main focus is on how IVE is implemented by a network of neighborhood-based, grassroots organizations and the alliances they have formed over the past decade. It lifts up the best practices based on over a decade of experiments and efforts to build capacity among grassroots organizations in diverse parts of the state. And it offers a snapshot of victories and a way to think about the spectrum of change that groups are making on the trajectory of the state.

This report builds on *Moments, Movements, Momentum: Engaging Voters, Scaling Power, Making Change* (Pastor, Perera, and Wander 2013), which was co-written by a co-founder of New Florida Majority (NFM). That report tells the story of NFM and Service Employees International Union as they developed an IVE strategy in the battleground state of Florida during the 2012 elections. Similar to this report, it focuses on IVE at the state level and on a data-driven approach to voter targeting and organizing. However, that report focused on what IVE looks like in a battleground state in a presidential election and also closely examined the evolution of— and tensions within—a community-labor partnership.

California is not a battleground state, but there are battleground regions. Organizers across the state have been focused on the “fishhook” counties—heading south from Orange County to San Diego and swinging back up through the Inland Valley to the Central Valley—where progressive ideas have been stymied by a combination of enriched economic interests and well-oiled (and often well-heeled) conservative groups. Yet those areas are also experiencing demographic shifts that traditionally benefit progressives, and so this report looks at the local-to-state connection where the IVE field has blossomed over the past decade to move power.

While there is a community-labor story in California, we focus on the work from the perspective of community-based organizers who are dedicated to increasing the power of those most impacted by inequities, structural racism, and social injustices. At the core is an orientation around movement building and not going it alone. That orientation means that there is attention to building an ecosystem of organizations rather than a singular empire. As a result, new groups have built their IVE capacity much more quickly than if they had to work alone or in competition.

This report draws on academic literature, the wisdom of practitioners, and our experience in the field over the course of years. We reviewed the relevant literature, conducted interviews, and held a virtual convening to get feedback on the findings and to gather recommendations. This report has also been informed by a multi-year effort to build IVE capacity in the state funded by The California Endowment with California Calls, PICO California, and USC PERE. Finally, it draws from a retrospective look at The James Irvine Foundation’s grant-making in voter and civic engagement which was led by Change Elemental with support by USC PERE.

This report primarily focuses on 501(c)3-funded work thus omits a big story of IVE in California. Several organizations have 501(c)4s and other structures that allow constituencies to exercise a greater amount power by getting involved in the nomination and election of candidates and the development and qualification of ballot initiatives. Because this report focuses on what foundations can do to support the civic engagement of residents, it does not cross into partisan politics. Yet, as this report will show, there is still much impact that non-partisan voter education, outreach, and turnout can have on the trajectory of a state.

A few caveats before proceeding: The IVE field in California is diverse and dynamic and we acknowledge that we have not done justice to all the successes, struggles, and experiences. There is much that could be written about the strategies around culture change and shifting narratives, particularly the messaging work on race, class, and government by Anat Sheker-Orsorio, Ian Haney López, and Demos⁴. There are too many local and statewide victories and too many players to include in this report, including the impressive gains in the youth

⁴ For more, see “Race-Class Narrative,” ASO Communications, <https://asocommunications.com/research-1>.



organizing field that has been documented by Veronica Terriquez at UC Santa Cruz⁵. Finally, while we look to the voices and wisdom from organizers in the field for this report, we take full responsibility for misunderstandings, omissions, and errors.

The report is organized as follows: It starts with an overview of IVE as a strategy to build power. The next section “Dr(IVE)ing in California: the Nuts and Bolts” highlights the prevailing practices of how IVE is implemented in California. It includes a discussion of a strategic focus on tipping points and turnout among new and infrequent voters and the role of technology in reaching scale in order to have decisive influence on closely-contested electoral outcomes. Next, it outlines three ways in which groups are seeking to transform the electorate: by closing demographic disparities between the general population and the electorate, by bridging

geographic divides between regions that lean progressive and those that lean conservative, and by expanding civic engagement beyond voting. The final part of this section focuses on how large-scale and year-round voter engagement feeds back into the ongoing organizing and base building. There are several examples of how groups are able to deepen their relationships with individuals directly impacted by the policies they are seeking to change and how groups are working to bring greater alignment among diverse communities towards a common values-based agenda.

The section “Making Change: Impacts of IVE in California” is an overview of the impacts that the field has had on the trajectory of the state: defining the issues for civic debate, winning policies and systems change, implementing policy wins, holding elected officials accountable, and becoming elected officials. Acknowledging that integrating organizing and voter engagement is not easy, “Navigating the Twists and Turns” discusses challenges in the work: boom and bust cycle of resources, juggling local and statewide work, conflict between breadth of voter engagement with depth of organizing and leadership development, differences between a voting bloc and a membership base, and the need to distinguish between c3 and c4 work. Finally, “Looking Ahead” lays out recommendations for supporting what works, solving what does not, and resourcing the field for the battles in 2020 and beyond.

⁵ For more, see publications on BHC Youth Civic Engagement and Community Well-Being, <https://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/bhc-youth-civic-eng-wellbeing/>

What is Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE)

For more than a decade, grassroots organizations across the country have turned their organizing and campaign skills to sway election outcomes. The electoral arena, once shunned by community organizers, is becoming a critical part of the equation in rebalancing power dynamics and decision making in the state. By registering new citizens, educating young voters, and motivating unlikely voters to go to the polls, organizers are setting goals around changing the electorate, advancing a proactive agenda, and leveraging large-scale contacts in order to gain greater voice, attention, and influence.

But the work does not stop after the votes are counted. Termed integrated voter engagement (IVE), the strategy is a “year-round program that connects voter engagement to issue-based organizing to build power, sustainability, and impact over multiple election cycles” (Paschall 2016). This means not just turning out voters, but transforming them to take part in a sustained base that contributes to justice on a regular basis. It means mobilizing mass numbers of people at critical junctures to the ballot box, converting unlikely voters to likely voters, and cultivating the deep relationships and leadership through on-going grassroots organizing (Pastor et al. 2013).

Integrating organizing and voter engagement is not easy. The work of organizing is year-round. Whether the base is comprised of institutions (such as schools or churches) or individuals (such as impacted residents or workers), organizing is dependent on the relationships, trust, and leadership built over time. At its core are one-on-one conversations, issue-based and political education, and leadership development. While the intensity of campaigns will ebb and flow, community organizing groups are always engaging members of their base whether moving them to a deeper understanding of inequities or motivating them to act.

Typical voter engagement work, in contrast, is clustered around a short-term election cycle. Get-out-the-vote (GOTV) programs are aimed at mobilizing supportive voters and at contacting as many voters as possible. When voter engagement is not integrated with the on-going organizing programs, elections work can be disruptive by siphoning away energy and capacity. Furthermore, episodic influxes of resources and outside operatives parachuting into a community can create tensions within the ecosystem of existing organizations. The voter data, volunteer base, and relationships that come together for an election can get disbanded and dispersed, leaving behind no lasting capacities in its wake.



At its best, IVE leverages electoral moments as milestones in a movement-building strategy. Grassroots members exercise their leadership by acting as precinct leaders, volunteer coordinators, and GOTV trainers. Voter attitudes, positions, and turnout are recorded and tracked over time. Because organizing and voter engagement utilize the same tactics—door-to-door canvassing, phone banking, and mobilization—the skills and experiences are transferable. And at the end of the election cycle, precinct leaders resume their roles as grassroots leaders; voter lists are culled to recruit members; and the power exercised in the election is redirected into policy and systems change campaigns.

One point of clarity: IVE is a strategy that can be carried out at various scales. It can be targeted at activating residents of a particular city, county, or region as in the case of Long Beach Rising, San Francisco Rising, and Bay Rising. It can be focused on a particular population in the way that Asian Pacific Environmental Network reaches Asian American and Pacific Islanders statewide and Power California harnesses the power of young people of color and their families. It can be carried out by 501(c)3 organizations, which are allowed to do general education, outreach, and turnout with limited lobbying on specific legislation—and also through 501(c)4 structures which are allowed to do more lobbying and some candidate work.

Dr(IVE)ing in California: The Nuts and Bolts

The prevailing IVE strategy in California is to increase the participation of those individuals historically excluded from civic processes so that their voices are heard, their issues and concerns are addressed, and they can see improvements in their communities. IVE integrates the best of voter engagement—an ability to mobilize voters who are a base of power that elected officials take seriously—with the on-going work of community organizing, issue campaigns, and public policy advocacy. This section highlights the prevailing practices of IVE in California.

■ Tipping Points and Turnout

In 2009, the eight grassroots organizations that eventually formed California Calls launched their first statewide voter engagement program reaching 100,000 voters. Their goal was to garner enough votes to sway closely contested elections. Their equation to power: turn out 500,000 voters in support of progressive issues by increasing turnout among new and infrequent voters by 15 percent. Behind these numbers was an analysis of how many votes made a difference in closely contested ballot initiatives and of the impact on the electorate from the increase in turnout among new and inactive voters in the 2008 presidential election (Kunisi et al. 2010).

While conventional electoral campaigns focus on those who are likely to vote, the IVE strategy is to turn out new and infrequent voters. And they have a geographic roadmap: increase the turnout among groups' base communities (low-income, immigrant, and young voters of color) in the counties that usually vote in favor of progressive policies and motivate new and infrequent voters in more conservative regions of the state to vote consistently and to vote in support of progressive issues. In 2009, the first statewide effort started in Los Angeles, the Bay Area including San Jose, and San Diego. By the following year, the effort expanded to the counties of Ventura, Riverside, San Bernardino, Fresno, Tulare, and Kern⁶.

Today, those groups have banded together with others to form Million Voters Project. MVP's goal is to turn out one million new and inconsistent voters, in particular, low-income voters, young voters, Black, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander communities, immigrants, and refugees, thereby transforming California's electorate. The seven statewide and regional community networks that comprise MVP include 93 affiliates deploying members and leaders in 26 counties working multiple election cycles and year-round. At this scale, the alliance can tip elections to defeat harmful initiatives or protect gains, and also to put forth bold proposals.

⁶ "Our History," California Calls, www.cacalls.org/who-we-are/our-history/.



■ Technology and Data

Equipping community organizations with the technology to reach voters and track results over time has been critical to reaching the scale of voter turnout needed. In the course of a decade, groups have increased their capacity from turning out 100,000 voters to one million voters. California Calls and PICO California have served as a backbone infrastructure to support its affiliates with technical assistance and resources needed to access phone-banking technologies and voter lists. This is key because while a study of Irvine grantees experimenting with new technologies in 2014 shows text messaging, emails, and social media can serve as another mobilization tool, in-person contact

(including by phone) is the most effective in motivating new and unlikely voters (Garcia Bedolla, Abrajano, and Junn 2015).

Predictive dialers, which are a calling system that automatically dials from a list of phone numbers, have been the main technology for phoning voters at scale—and it has dramatically increased organizations’ ability to reach a large number of voters in a short period of time. Organizations are now able to contact not the usual hundreds of people but rather tens of thousands of people. And they can use it as a way to poll voters: Sacramento ACT used polling to demonstrate the approval rating for the city’s district attorney and sheriff as part of a campaign to target anti-immigrant policies of the sheriff’s office. Khmer Girls in Action (KGA) conducted youth-led action surveys that included district-specific outreach so that they were able to use data about community members’ needs and interests to put pressure on city councilmembers. Organizations are also able to patch-through calls so that the voter can speak directly to legislative offices.

Access to voter files has also been a game-changer. Organizations have been able to build their own voter data files that are tailored to their local organizing and advocacy work. If groups want to organize incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals who might be especially motivated on criminal justice reform, that demographic is not usually included as a checkbox in voter lists. Through IVE campaigns, groups collect and record information that is helpful for their on-going work. Leaders have been able to better target their outreach using tailored data that tracks who they have talked to and their past involvement in campaign activities. Using voter files, determining the universe of voters to contact, tracking outcomes, and using tablets require substantial technical assistance and support. After all, the so-called “digital divide” persists and many low-income folks of color in these organizations have

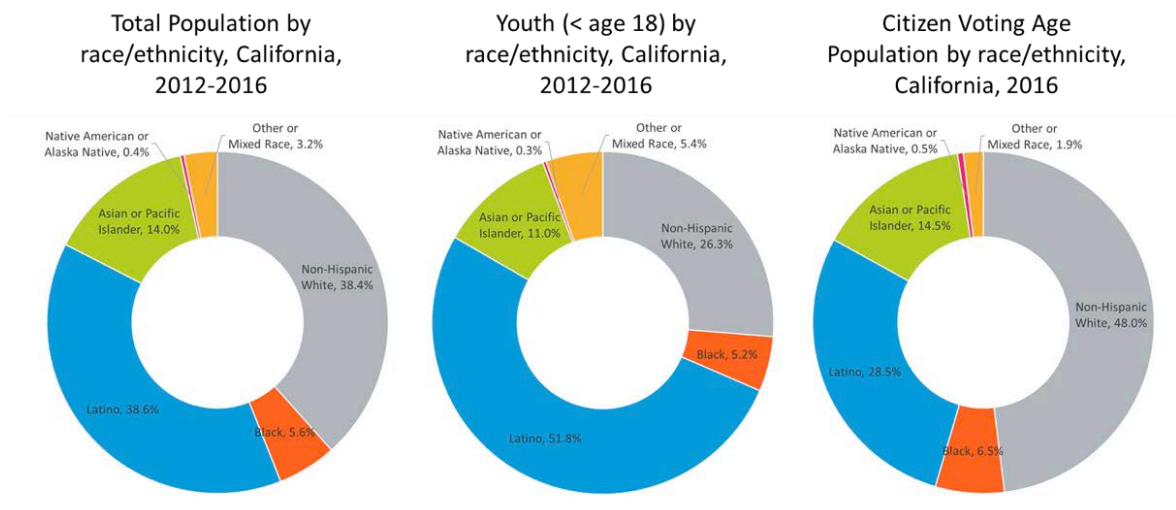
been structurally excluded from basic technology literacy. Ongoing, consistent support has been necessary for developing staff’s mastery and ability to nimbly adjust to the inevitable technology issues that can threaten the efficacy of civic engagement programs.

■ Transforming the Electorate

CLOSING DEMOGRAPHIC DISPARITIES

Underlying the focus on new and infrequent voters is a goal of shifting the composition of California’s electorate with attention to race, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status. A wide disparity exists between who lives in California and who is making decisions at the ballot box. Figure 1 is one illustration of this gap. As the chart on the left shows, 38 percent of the total population of California is white while 39 percent is Latinx, 14 percent is Asian or Pacific Islander (API), almost 6 percent is Black, 0.4 percent is Native American, and 3 percent is other or mixed-race. The middle chart showing that younger Californians are much more diverse is a way to get a glimpse into the state’s demographic future. The chart on the right shows that the population that is eligible to vote (defined as age 18 and older and is a citizen) is 48 percent white, 29 percent Latinx, 15 percent API, 7 percent Black, 0.5 percent Native American, and 2 percent other or mixed-race. There is a clear disconnect.

Figure 1. RACIAL/ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF CALIFORNIA’S TOTAL POPULATION, YOUTH, AND VOTING-AGE CITIZENS



Source: USC PERE analysis of 2016 5-year IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS) microdata from IPUMS-USA and 2016 Current Population Survey (CPS) from IPUMS-CPS; CVAP defined as age 18 and over and citizen.

Among those who are most likely to vote, the racial/ethnic gap is even sharper. According to the latest poll by Public Policy Institute of California, 58 percent of likely voters are white, 47 percent are 55 and older, 46 percent earn \$80,000 or more, and 67 percent own their home

(Baldassare, Bonner, Dykman, and Lawler 2019; Baldassare, Bonner, Dykman, and Ward 2019). And the racial and socioeconomic gaps matter: The priorities of an older, whiter, more affluent electorate are likely to be different than those of a younger generation struggling to get by in places with high costs of living. In fact, research has found that counties with greater racial differences between seniors and youth under age 18 tend to have lower per-child local revenues for education spending (Pastor, Scoggins, and Treuhaft 2017).

Efforts like the California Native Vote Project, Power California, AAPIs for Civic Empowerment, and African American Civic Engagement Project are critical because they activating voters that are largely overlooked by traditional electoral campaigns. Moreover, they understand the contexts of their specific communities which is critical to garnering support on specific proposals—and are committed to the longer-term work of organizing the community around a common set of progressive values.

For example, recognizing that individuals serving time in jail (rather than serving on a felony charge in state or federal prison) can vote, a New Way of Life practices an “In-Reach” model in L.A. County jails that has been adapted by other organizations. With this, grassroots leaders can educate folks in county jails about their voting rights, as well as register, educate, and turn out eligible voters in jails. This approach has been adapted to San Diego County with volunteers emailing eligible voters in San Diego County jails about their voting rights and the process for registering to vote in jail. Pillars of the Community developed an “Inside Organizers Fellowship” that trains currently incarcerated folks to educate, register, and turn out other incarcerated eligible voters.

BRIDGING GEOGRAPHIC DIVIDES

Changing the composition of California’s electorate is also about bridging geographic divides between regions that lean progressive and those that are more conservative. From the late 1960s through the 1980s, Republicans were successful in a “fish hook” strategy to firm up conservative votes in the Central Valley, south into the Inland Valley, west into San Diego, and swinging back north into Orange County and parts of Los Angeles (Kousser 2009; Walters 2012).

California Calls and its allies have been employing a two-part, “reverse fish hook” strategy. One focus is on increasing turnout among constituencies that groups are organizing (women, POC, young folks, low-income and working class) in counties that usually sway progressive like Los Angeles, those in the San Francisco Bay Area, and Santa Clara. The second focus is on shifting regions (Inland Valley, San Diego County, Kern, Fresno, Ventura, and Sacramento) and motivating new and infrequent voters both to support progressive policies and to vote consistently (California Calls 2010).

Over the past 10 to 15 years, there have been philanthropic investments in building up the civic infrastructure to support the voice, influence, and interests of historically marginalized communities. Launched in 2010, The California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities

(BHC) invested considerably in building organizing capacity in 14 diverse places across the state—and more recently in building IVE capacity among a cohort of BHC partners. The James Irvine Foundation funded voter and civic engagement for 15 years and the California Civic Participation Funders supported efforts in four counties: San Diego, Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside (Cha and Woodwell, Jr. 2016).

Those investments, and specifically around organizing, have provided the ground upon which to build IVE capacity. Today, there is a vibrant and emerging field of organizing in the “fish hook” regions that are traditionally rightwing strongholds with more dramatic power gaps between low-income communities and elite economic interests (such as those in the agricultural and warehousing sectors). Issues and language that resonate in Los Angeles and the Bay Area do not translate well in conservative counties. Local groups are essential in bringing forward issues of equity and racial justice—which have been politically untouchable third-rail issues—in ways that connect with voters rather than alienate.

EXPANDING ENGAGEMENT

IVE is an effort to reverse a cycle of alienation.

Policymakers are often disconnected from those communities who experience most acutely the detrimental consequences of structural inequalities—low-income communities, youth, immigrants, refugees, Native peoples, and the LGBTQ community. As a result, elected officials do not always prioritize the issues that such constituents care about. They may lack the experience, but they may also not feel the political pressure. This leaves decision makers continuing to ignore communities and their concerns. Organizers are disrupting that cycle by engaging communities in the political process so that their voices and concerns can be heard.

Furthermore, groups are pushing back against an approach to electioneering that “turns citizens into customers and candidates into brands,” in the words of one interviewee. This kind of electoral strategy, centered on slogans and stylized images, fails to build an informed, committed, and energized base. It makes people passive recipients of public policy instead of active agents in governance. In contrast, groups engaged in IVE are in constant contact with voters and encouraging them to take action. This approach not only broadens and shifts the electorate, but also continues the work of redefining the very notion of civic engagement and the role of residents in their democracy.

To keep new and infrequent voters engaged beyond an election, groups are experimenting with a range of activities and approaches: Working Partnerships in San Jose have

“When voters don’t hear anybody talking about issues that they care about, when they see elected officials who don’t look like them, who don’t show up in their part of town, then they feel uninspired to come out.”

– INTERVIEWEE

neighborhood team leads who help with the ongoing follow-up and engagement in between electoral cycles. InnerCity Struggle, based in East Los Angeles, identifies two to four thousand voters who say they want to get more involved. Of those, about 10 percent show up to activities and events such as town halls, forums, and cultural events. That 10 percent is then targeted for deeper organizing through commitment forms, pledge cards, and invitations to join one of their organizing groups. Community Coalition in South Los Angeles has tapped the voter database to turn out folks for their annual music and arts festival Powerfest. In turn, folks learn more about the organization, its issues, and ways to get engaged. In response to the proposed Muslim Ban, Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA), which organizes refugees in San Diego, quickly organized a phone bank—thus leveraging their database developed through IVE—to mobilize turnout for a community town hall. During the event, lawyers distributed information to assuage the community’s understandably heightened fears and provide concrete support. And Pomona Economic Opportunity Center reached out to their lists to address the Latinx immigrant community’s fears around including a question about citizenship in the 2020 census, proposed changes to public charge, and raids carried out by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

■ Strengthening the Organizing

GROWING CIVIC LEADERSHIP

In comparison to traditional GOTV, which often recruits canvassers from outside communities for the short-term, IVE-focused organizations cultivate existing leaders and contacts in the community to lead the work as canvassers, phone bankers, and coordinators either as paid temporary staff or as volunteers. Central to organizing is learning to wield one’s voice to shift public narratives and understanding by speaking from one’s

own personal, authentic experience. Local leaders and members play an important role as messengers to sway their neighbors because they usually have a message that resonates. It works best when young voters are talking to other young voters, when refugees are talking to other refugees, and when Central Valley voters are talking to other Central Valley voters.

Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) has an “A Team” of 80 resident leaders who participate in political education to connect with voting as a “revolutionary act of inclusion.” Upon graduation, they serve as precinct captains and volunteer 300 hours of work towards various campaigns. PANA, similarly, has an advocacy academy that engages 15 young professionals on local, state, and federal policy through political education and leadership



development. These young adults work on civic engagement campaigns and mobilize others to become more involved in short-term GOTV efforts as well as longer-term campaigns.

Directing engaging those most impacted by an issue can be key. For example, resources to support Proposition 47—the measure that would “de-felonize” drug use and helped to “clean” records and reduce incarceration—allowed groups to hire canvassers who had been recently released from prison. Because they could draw on personal experience, hiring formerly incarcerated folks made a considerable difference in the quality and types of conversations they could have with voters. One interviewee shared how a phone banker who had been incarcerated was able to sway voters:

“He would share his story... in a way that says, ‘Let me offer you another way of thinking about this and let me share with you my experience, and it may not change your vote but I just want to share with you for a moment about me.’ The way that I saw him meet people where they are at, but take them someplace new, was really profound.”

Even people who are excluded from voting, including undocumented residents and youth, can still get involved as canvassers and phone bankers to encourage others to vote. Undocumented folks offer a compelling message by illuminating the responsibility of those who have the privilege of voting to do so with them in mind. Pomona Economic Opportunity Center (PEOC) found that many voters are in mixed-status families, so they have also been able to reach undocumented folks who can then learn about PEOC and access services and get connected to their work.

Youth organizing groups are tapping young adults who have graduated from their high school programs to get involved in voter outreach, which has been a good way to engage youth members once they become alumni. To recruit canvassers, InnerCity Struggle and Khmer Girls In Action, for example, draw on their high school program alumni who are already primed for the job because of the political education and organizing skills developed through the high school program.

For those making a foray into civic engagement for the first time, participating in IVE introduces them to the building blocks of organizing skills—such as persuading

“The undocumented community would ask voters to have them on their shoulders when they walk into the polls. Although they have contributed to this country for 20 years, although they have children who are citizens, they can’t make those decisions at the polls, they do not have the ability to vote. Now a number of those people that we talked to at the doors are volunteers in our Rapid Response Program, which offers legal observer work around ICE raids.”

– INTERVIEWEE

voters, framing challenging issues, managing data, public speaking, and coordinating teams. By involving leaders through multiple cycles, canvassers are able to become team leaders who manage phone banks and walk programs. Leaders have been able to gain such valuable skills that organizations hire them into full-time, staff positions or campaign managers recruit them to work on an electoral campaign.



ALIGNING AROUND VALUES

The long-term goal is to cultivate voters into becoming part of a larger base of residents aligned around racial, economic, social, immigrant, educational, and health justice. The work of aligning around a common agenda starts by working across organizations based in different communities and working on different issues. Communities are often divided around homelessness, LGBTQ rights, and a myriad of other issues that can be points of contention on the road to justice. Indeed, it is not just conservative forces that progressive groups are up against; they often have to push their own base to understand and adopt a greater awareness and understanding of intersecting issues.

MVP serves as an important vehicle for doing this work because the coalition makes decisions together about what issues to work on and what positions to take. For ACCE, being part of a long-term, multi-issue alliance means that they have to figure out ways to link the issues being discussed among the coalition with the campaign on which its members are focused (which is currently around affordable housing). That exchange facilitates greater impact and greater awareness and education among its base around multiple issues.

Due to its involvement in MVP, Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN), which works on environmental justice in Oakland and Richmond, had to take on criminal justice, an issue that divides its base. Discussions around Proposition 47 necessitated challenging conversations and political education with its leaders and members. APEN partnered with the Asian Prisoner Support Committee to share impacts of the repeal of the death penalty, which dredged up difficult conversations around taking stances as a member of APEN as opposed to members' personal stances. To help move members, organizers worked to highlight common values, such as discussing the disproportionate impact of over-policing on communities of color. While this common value platform did not change all of the members' hearts and minds completely, it did push people to at least be neutral on the issue. Without involvement in MVP,

it is likely that APEN would not have taken a position because of a sharp schism in their base.

For a group like InnerCity Struggle who has been an early leader of IVE, the degree of support for its broader reform agenda is stronger because organizers have been talking to voters repeatedly for a long time. In short, the IVE strategy is not only successful in turning out the vote, but it also serves as a form of political education and alignment. It is finding that its agenda and message is becoming more and more familiar with its universe of voters—and that they are understanding the issues better and supporting progressive initiatives more strongly as a result.

African American Civic Engagement Project: Strengthening Voice and Capacity

The African American Civic Engagement Project (AACEP), a project of California Calls, emerged in the wake of Black Lives Matters and the national movement to call attention to the violence and systemic racism against the Black community. California has the fifth largest African American population in the U.S. While the older generations have been a reliable part of the progressive vote and leaders in the fight for civil rights, organizers were seeing a decline in voter participation and civic engagement among the younger generation. The political power and voice of the community is further weakened as families have been displaced from the urban core and pushed out to the suburbs and rural areas, like Antelope Valley, Inland Valley, Stockton, and Fresno, where there is less Black-led civic infrastructure.

AACEP is a focused effort to mitigate against the further dissipation of political power of the African American community. Within the movement and at statewide civic engagement tables, Black-led organizations are not present or well-represented. So AACEP is aimed at building up the civic engagement infrastructure dedicated to developing Black leadership and increasing IVE capacity with attention to those areas where the community is moving and growing.

Twelve Black-led grassroots organizations across six counties participate in the project. Named by county, they are: Youth Uprising and Black Organizing Project in Alameda; A Safe Return Project and Building Blocks for Kids in Contra Costa; A New Way of Life, Black Women for Wellness, and Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) in Los Angeles; Time for Change Foundation, BLUE Education Foundation, and Congregations Organizing for Prophetic Engagement (COPE) in San Bernardino; and Pillars of the Community and Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA) in San Diego.

These groups have demonstrated capacity to participate, commitment to progressive social change, interest in civic engagement, and willingness to scale up civic engagement work. Each received core support grants and intensive capacity building support, including legal training, data support, financial systems, executive leadership development, power analysis, IVE strategies, organizing, leadership development, campaign development, field strategy, and field operations. Groups conducted civic engagement programs every year, including four GOTV programs in the 2016 and 2018 elections. Groups were supported via comprehensive training, technical assistance, political education, as well as weekly field operations calls.

In the Spring of 2017, LA CAN, A New Way of Life, and their ally Community Coalition anchored a 501(c)4 voter outreach program in South LA, which helped win Measure H, a Los Angeles

County housing bond. The groups contacted 26,570 voters: 74 percent of whom agreed to vote Yes. Measure H passed with 69.3 percent of the vote—a margin of 22,570 votes.

In the fall of 2017, AACEP conducted 21 base-building programs where canvassing teams followed up with supportive voters who had been identified throughout the year to engage them in activities, such as educational events and forums on school discipline, housing, and district attorney accountability. They also conducted deeper training for staff and member leaders on organizing, voter engagement, and registration.

As part of a long-term district attorney accountability program, the June 2018 civic engagement program educated voters in 11 counties about the roles and responsibilities of district attorneys and identified voters who would be supportive of progressive district attorney candidates. During the November 2018 program, groups engaged 5,854 and registered at least 235 eligible incarcerated voters in Los Angeles and San Diego counties.

In another program, 80 grassroots leaders from 10 organizations conducted census message testing with a particular focus on Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties. The survey had 13 questions around general awareness of the Census, methods, key messages, fears and concerns, and questions about the proposed citizenship question. The program included door-to-door canvassing, site and street canvassing of “hard-to-count” voters (e.g. people experiencing homelessness, formerly incarcerated individuals, parents, immigrants, refugees, and young people), phone banking, strategic email, social media communications, and political education workshops.

Over the past three years, AACEP has contacted 150,078 voters and identified 138,642 of them as supporters (72 percent). In November 2018, groups turned out 66.9 percent of those supportive voters, 3.9 points higher than all registered voters (63 percent) and 11.7 points higher than statewide African American voter turnout (55.2 percent).

Sources: Interview with Kevin Cosney, 2017. African American Civic Engagement Project. 2018. AACEP June 2018 CEP Preliminary Report. Los Angeles, CA: African American Civic Engagement Project; African American Civic Engagement Project. 2019a. AACEP Update Three Year Summary. Los Angeles, CA: African American Civic Engagement Project; African American Civic Engagement Project. 2019b. African American Civic Engagement Project November 2018 CEP Report. Los Angeles, CA: African American Civic Engagement Project; African American Civic Engagement Project. 2019c. Census Message Research with Black Populations in California AACEP. Los Angeles, CA: African American Civic Engagement Project.

Making Change: Impacts of IVE in California

Nearly two decades ago, grassroots organizations made the decision to fight back at the ballot box and get serious about building enough power to shift from playing defense to going on the offense. And their approach to focus on a coordinated integrated voter engagement strategy proved effective. By building a shared infrastructure to increase their capacity to mobilize voters, they have been able to gain enough influence to be taken seriously by decision makers and other influential players. Collectively, they can win bold proposals that address the needs of those communities historically excluded from decision making processes.

What has begun to happen is what one interviewee calls a “cycle of wins.” As victories directly address the community’s needs, such as funding for housing or an increase in minimum wage, grassroots members become more motivated to engage. An organizer working in San Bernardino and Riverside counties notes that a successful electoral campaign “allows our constituents to see, in real time and in a very tangible way, the result and impact of their engagement. When they see and feel the immediate impact of their ability to reach a goal, it gives a boost to and affirms our power to create change.”

This raises an important point: Wins are not just about the policy victory. A win is also about the intangible and transformative impact on individuals to believe in their own power and to be part of a movement for change. A win is about moving someone to consider the issues of others and take action as strongly as they would on their own issues. While this section focuses on the impact on the policy landscape, it is important to note that those wins are also impacting a sense of community empowerment, hence the long-term trajectory of the state.

■ Defining the Issues

Recognition of community interests and concerns as valid for debate is a success in and of itself. The year-round engagement with voters enables organizations to build the momentum needed to create opportunities and shift political will. In the words of one interviewee: “Often there are issues that elected officials are not working on, and we need to create the momentum.” Polling voters on the phones, sending patch-through calls to elected officials, and mobilizing people to a hearing are all ways that groups put pressure on decision-makers to take up an issue.

Groups are also using IVE infrastructure to determine priorities and concerns within a community. During the June 2016 primary, PANA asked voters if the county was doing enough to invest in refugee families and asked for their input on the priorities for the county. When

affordable housing emerged as a priority, PANA followed up with the same voters in the November election and to ask if they would vote in favor of a local tourist tax for affordable housing. PANA organizers then conducted multiple civic engagement programs through canvassing, phone banking, or door knocking. This is a prime example of two benefits of IVE: first, it can surface an issue that might not be immediately thought of as a top concern for a particular constituency (housing for refugees), and second, it can identify and build momentum for moving decision makers on that issue.

■ Winning Policies

There have been a significant number of policy victories and structural reforms as a result of increased IVE capacity in the state. Propositions 30 and 55 (education funding); 47 and 57 (criminal justice reform); and 56 (cigarette tax) are just a few of the victories won at the ballot box. The environmental justice and housing justice movements have racked up numerous legislative victories, including establishing an environmental justice fund from cap-and-trade revenue, allocating one billion dollars for rooftop solar on multifamily affordable housing units, and putting a statewide cap on rent increases and providing protections to millions of renters.

But it is not just important at the state level. Important decisions around land use, planning, and budgeting are made locally and this creates additional opportunities for organizations to leverage power built through IVE. In 2015, the City of Merced increased budget transparency by implementing a new online portal. Now city residents can view how taxpayer dollars are being distributed and spent in real time. Monterey County expanded health care access for immigrants who are low-income and undocumented through Esperanza Care. In 2016, Measure E passed in San Jose, requiring employers of at least 36 employees to extend additional work hours to part-time employees before hiring or contracting other people. This protects more than 64,000 part-time workers in San Jose. At times, local campaign wins create momentum for statewide impact. Minimum wage ordinances have been passed across cities in California and the momentum built up to a statewide increase in the minimum wage. In 2018, the Los Angeles City Council legalized street vending, and, soon after, the Governor signed SB946, The Safe Sidewalk Vending Act.

■ Implementing Policies

Organizations that utilize IVE are also well-positioned to monitor the implementation of policies. In the campaign process, they become well-versed in the policy through participation in developing the proposal, being at the negotiating table, weighing in on pros and cons

of taking a position, or educating and gaining the support of others. This expertise is augmented with a base of voters and residents who took action during the campaign and their relationships to institutional partners and allies from their on-going issue campaigns.

After the successful passage of Prop 47, Sacramento ACT noticed that funds were being directed towards programs inside the jails rather than towards rehabilitation or re-entry programs. Organizers returned to voters they had contacted and mobilized during the campaign to invite them to listening sessions and to get their input on priority areas of investment. Building on the campaign for Prop 47 and their on-going organizing in the local school district, COPE leaders were able to push the school district to submit a proposal for Prop 47 grant funds to support alternatives to punitive discipline. The district ultimately won \$1.9 million for youth development, intervention, and prevention of those at risk of incarceration.

In the passage of Prop 30, which increased revenue flows for education, the adoption of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) requires parent engagement and consultation. Community leaders had been so involved in the campaign that they were, in some cases, educating the school board members. For example, Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC), which works in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, facilitated trainings with the school board and monitored plans to ensure that resources were averted from punitive measures and directed towards community-identified needs such as parent centers.

Community Coalition, InnerCity Struggle, and Advancement Project California worked together as the Equity Alliance for LA's Kids to advance the implementation of LCFF in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and continue to push for a Student Equity Need Index that will ensure the highest need schools in the district received additional funding. The Dolores Huerta Foundation engaged students and parents in advocating for improvements in their school districts by establishing parent and student education committees to contribute to development of the Local Control Accountability Plans in 10 school districts.

■ Holding Electeds Accountable

Implementation also involves holding elected officials and policymakers accountable year round, not just on election day—a direct outcome of residents and voters re-conceptualizing

“We were the most knowledgeable community members about how the LCFF process worked, what was spelled out in the legislation, and how community had to be involved in defining priorities. We were training school board members. Our students and parents knew more about how it was going to work than the school board members did because we had been trained from early on.”

– INTERVIEWEE

democracy and their role in it. This continuous grassroots pressure prevents the problem of elected leaders gaining power and failing to deliver or prioritize their promised policy agendas. Changing the relationships of accountability results in a self-reinforcing cycle that fuels greater voter interest and enthusiasm. When elected officials are held accountable to deliver on what they campaign on, voters keep coming back because they see they have a real voice and real choice in contrast to becoming disenchanted when elected officials fail to deliver meaningful progress.

In Fresno, Faith in the Valley flipped the dynamics in the mayoral race so that candidates had to respond to the community's priorities rather than vice versa. Starting with action research that kicked off 18 months before the election, community leaders held listening sessions with community members, schools, organizational partners, decision makers, and experts. They also convened 15 different congregations. This process culminated in eight priority issues outlined in a "community and grassroots policy agenda" presented at a candidates' forum. Early on in the race, candidates had supported increased policing. Faith in the Valley re-directed the conversation by uplifting the community's priorities around the slumlord crisis and support for community policing. Even though the more conservative candidate ultimately won the election, they were able to press the new mayor to pass a two-year housing inspection program to curb slumlords.

■ **Sitting in Positions of Authority**

Holding positions on public boards and commissions that provide oversight of government agencies is also a part of intentional investment to build the civic engagement capacity of underrepresented communities to actively participate in public decision-making processes. Urban Habitat's Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute, for example, trains social justice advocates from low-income communities on the "inside game." Similar leadership development programs to prepare grassroots leaders for official positions of authority are in place across the state: Working Partnerships USA's 1000 Leaders Project in San Jose, Liberty Hill Foundation's Commission Training Program in Los Angeles, and Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE)'s transformative leadership development program.

As documented in the report, *1000 Leaders (and More) Rising: Developing a New Generation for Progressive Governance* (Chlala et al. 2019), there are emerging efforts to prepare grassroots leaders to run for local office. IVE provides hands-on training, experience, and relationships that can inspire and support grassroots residents' rising civic leadership. When complemented by a strong "outside" game, leaders on the "inside" can help move policy forward and model a different kind of leadership—one that breaks the cycle of alienation and works to bring on authentic avenues for community participation in the decision-making processes that impact their lives.

Navigating the Twists and Turns

While the story of IVE in California, so far, demonstrates the benefits and real impacts of such a power-building strategy, grassroots organizations currently face the following challenges:

BOOM VS. BUST

Voter engagement funding allows organizations to pay members as canvassers and phone bankers. In communities with high unemployment rates and few jobs, IVE “creates a jolt of opportunity” as one organizer describes it. Even if canvassers are only hired for intensive periods a few times a year, their work can set off a spark for their long-term engagement. Yet for others, these temporary jobs conflict with their belief in creating living wage jobs. And, in most cases, a large percentage of paid canvassers will not return for the next election cycle because they have found more stable employment.

Temporary influxes of resources also fatigues staff. Organizational staff and civic engagement program leads often invest considerable energy and time to provide basic job skills training to the canvassing team—something they are more than willing to do, but which puts further strain on their already limited capacity. Finally, the time and resources that are devoted to paid staff also leads to relative starvation of the volunteer program, which does not receive the development, cultivation, and attention that the paid side does.

STATEWIDE VS. LOCAL

Because local organizations receive resources to work on state-level measures, it can be a challenge to balance and weave together the statewide and local work. Not only can it be difficult to energize a base around a state-level campaign and create a common narrative that ties the work together, but the statewide work can take attention and capacity away from the local work. For example, in the case of Measure U, Sacramento ACT labored for over six months to get the local parcel tax on the ballot. There is concern that it lost (by an extremely slim margin) because volunteers were pulled in to work on the state-level tobacco tax, which had received an influx of funding during the same time.

Because of this tension, many organizations face a difficult decision: Accept the resources attached with the statewide measures, but sacrifice some of the focus on local resources. Or turn down the statewide-associated resources, and try to find alternative funding. Indeed, one community organization chose to pass up resources that came with running a statewide propositions program because of a concern that it would have siphoned energy away from a local Protect Oakland Renters ballot measure. An alternative that is more possible in regions with greater flows of funding.

BREADTH VS. DEPTH

As one interviewee stated: “We need to evolve our IVE strategies in order to achieve that level of both scale and depth.” Whereas electoral engagement facilitates the former, grassroots organizing excels on the latter. While IVE is meant to marry these distinct but complimentary strategies, it is still a challenge. For example, canvassers conducting GOTV drives may flag people who are interested in becoming more involved in neighborhood or regional issues, but many organizations simply do not have the capacity to follow up with each of these voters with the level of depth needed to fold them into their advocacy and organizing efforts. As one organizer put it, “the migration from canvassing to organized base has been marginal.”

This challenge is magnified by the fact that funding tends to fall short specifically during follow-up—the period where organizations perhaps need even more resources to engage people in depth. As one interview explained: “It takes a lot of capacity to do the follow-up because you’re talking to thousands of voters in two weeks and you come out of it with a list of hot leads you need to contact.” As such, groups need support to consistently integrate IVE, which is predicated on the capacity to follow up at scale.

VOTERS VS. MEMBERS

In order to fold voters into an active base of members and leaders, organizations need more capacity not only for follow up but to keep people engaged. Mobilizing voters is very different than organizing members. Turning out voters is a light and relatively passive ask: Vote. In contrast, organizing focuses on developing the leadership and agency of people who typically do not feel empowered or compelled take action and demand change from elected officials.

For some, the tradeoff means a smaller contingent who have deeper knowledge around the power dynamics, contexts, and goals of campaigns—as this level of engagement is critical to maintaining a consistent base. Additionally, the strategy of folding voters into the membership may be in conflict with some groups’ organizing models. PICO, for instance, works in and with congregations and schools, and draws from these institutions to build cohorts of trained leaders, so it does not make sense to fold all voters it contacts into its membership base.

C3 VS. C4

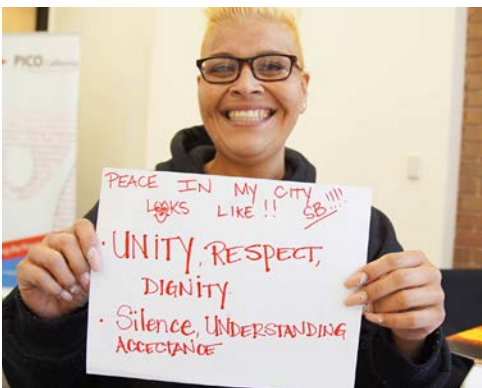
Aligning efforts between 501(c)3s and 501(c)4s allows groups to maximize resources for different aspects of a campaign. 501(c)3s can engage in public education, candidates’ forum (to which all candidates are invited), conduct nonpartisan GOTV activities—as well as lobby for legislation and support a ballot measure to a limited extent. To bolster those efforts, 501(c)4s are able to engage in unlimited lobbying and advocacy around specific legislative proposals or ballot propositions—and put candidates’ feet to the fire.

But the legal restrictions around 501(c)3 and 501(c)4 can ensnare groups doing IVE work

if they do not have administrative safeguards in place to keep the funding and the activities separate. Groups must develop capacities to navigate winding paths around what is possible and what is legally under lockdown with (c)3 funding, while also meticulously tracking the labor that falls under their (c)4 structure. Garnering (c)4-specific funding is especially difficult, and thus lobbying budgets tend to quickly dry up. So groups must be especially strategic about when and how they use (c)3 and (c)4 funds.

TECHNOLOGICALLY CHALLENGED...

While predictive dialers have been game-changers for organizing groups, systems cannot operate within the existing technological infrastructure at many organizations—and that includes computers, cell phones, tablets, laptops, wiring, and internet that can sustain 20 simultaneous



phone bankers. Accordingly, implementing IVE, for many, requires an infrastructural overhaul, such as installing T-1 lines that increase internet and phone-related capacities.

Furthermore, new technology creates the need for staff capacity to install and maintain these systems and equipment. This is especially challenging given how small organizations already tend to lack infrastructural needs such as phones, laptops, reliable internet, and even space for phone banks. And the ability for members and leaders to use all the technology varies. As one could imagine, it comes much more easily for young people and for youth organizing groups. On the other hand, it is quite challenging for older members and those who have not grown up with or had access to cell phones and tablets.



IT'S NOT FOR EVERYONE

Finally, it is important to explicitly recognize that not every group has the capacity, nor desire, to take on IVE: other power-building strategies may align more closely with their visions, capabilities, and bases. After all, IVE requires a heavy lift, and organizations have to be ready to truly integrate it into the way they work. Treating IVE as an ancillary branch is antithetical to its scope as a power-building strategy.

On the flip side, this also means that the capacities of local base-building organizations engaged in IVE, rooted in marginalized communities, need to continue to be fortified in order to develop the knowledge and energy of staff, leadership, and the board. As listed above, technical assistance, physical infrastructure, and capacity building around organizing skills—as well as values-based alignment that strengthens an ecosystem—warrant continuous and ideally increased investment.


Building Healthy Communities IVE Cohort: Expanding the Ecosystem

Since 2010, The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative seeks to transform communities devastated by health inequities into places where every person has the possibility to thrive and live a healthy life. What has become clearer is that an inclusive democracy is both part of both what is needed to achieve healthy communities and is part of a vision of what is a healthy community. In places where the majority of the population has been historically excluded from democratic processes, community organizing has proven to be effective in raising the voices, concerns, and influence of under-represented residents to demand change.

To further increase the capacity, sustainability, and influence of community organizations in under-resourced communities, The California Endowment funded a multi-year program for California Calls and PICO California to establish a cohort of BHC grantees to jumpstart their IVE capacity. In 2017, they launched the first cohort with six groups: Hmong Innovating Politics (HIP) in Sacramento, Fathers and Families of San Joaquin in Stockton, Community Water Center based in Visalia, Khmer Girls in Action in Long Beach, Latino Health Access in Santa Ana, and Mid-City CAN in San Diego. Pilipino Worker Center in Los Angeles and Pomona Economic Opportunity Center have since joined with plans to bring in three more organizations.

For California Calls and PICO California, the program has been an opportunity to expand the IVE ecosystem to specific populations and places that need an infusion of funding, training, and tailored technical assistance to get an IVE program off the ground. While every organization in the cohort has a different mission and focuses on a different issue, they share a common orientation around organizing and building power. If they do not have an existing grassroots membership base in place, they should at least have an interest in organizing. IVE is most impactful when a group already has (or is planning) a campaign, and voter engagement can give the campaign more muscle.

Because the program is a cohort model, it is a requirement that groups be good collaborators. Yet beyond the short-term needs to get along with others, IVE is rooted in a vision, analysis, and strategy that is ultimately about building and shifting power at a scale that is beyond the reach of any single organization. So a commitment and willingness to learn with others, share data, map out coordinated strategies, and regular communication to monitor progress toward shared goals are all essential to both the success of the cohort and to the IVE movement.




The first step was a needs assessment of each organization's capacity and potential to lead an IVE program and to inform what kinds of training are needed as well as what type of technical assistance providers should be brought in for support. The assessment looked at basic budget and organizational infrastructure (financial management systems, board, organizational structure, program planning and management, baseline technology, and data management); organizing and leadership development; voter engagement capacity; and power analysis and campaign planning.

Because the power of IVE is that it is integrated into the fabric of the organization, groups have to be prepared to adapt their staffing structures and program planning because the organizing and civic engagement work need to be mutually conducive and intertwined, and not operating with separate aims. Furthermore, it has to be an organizational commitment—which means that the board of directors needs to be on board, too.

The multi-year program has provided support for groups to develop a local power analysis and a two- to three- year power-building plan that works for their local communities and fits with their organizational mission. In two years, there have been three civic engagement programs, which are short-term, intensive, voter outreach campaigns that are about reaching large numbers of voters. Each program is followed up with an organizing plan to bring some of those voters into an on-going membership base. Organizations receive support for resourcing the civic engagement programs, which includes pay for temporary staff to do the outreach, food for canvassers, supplies, and other associated costs. Organizations also received all the equipment needed to run the civic engagement program, such as tablets, laptops, cellphones, and year-round access to database technology.

While the training and technical assistance support has shifted over time, it has happened through full cohort trainings, regional trainings, one-on-one trainings, and tailored technical assistance. Over the course of the past decade, California Calls and its anchors have developed tools and templates for all things IVE: from budgets to organizing scripts to power analyses. While the work has to be tailored to each organization's mission, priorities, and population, the basic checklists of IVE are the same: what you need to buy for a neighborhood canvass, how to prepare the bags for the canvass, and making sure you have enough printer ink if you are using paper lists.

Trainings have spanned topics such as how to talk with and activate leaders, how to hold one-on-one meetings, plans for team meetings, and how structure neighborhood captains, leadership, and/or congregation teams. Data and data analysis, such as an ability to target voters and build lists for phone banking and canvassing, has risen to the top as a major need. While some of the groups have developed in-house capacity to access their voter data files to use in the year-round work, others are still not able to do as much with the data as they



could. Fundraising and sustaining the work are perennial concerns. As a result, the cohort has received trainings on pitching to funders, building relationships, and targeted fundraising for specific needs, such as database and technology.

A key feature of the cohort is that they get to learn together. The peer-to-peer model has been essential to the success of the program. As groups are running similar campaigns, like winning funding for youth development services, they are able to share their power analyses and share experiences about what is going well and what is challenging. New challenges always arise: With climate change, extreme heat is now a factor to consider. A shooting in a neighborhood can affect where some groups are knocking on doors. The internet goes down which disables the predictive dialer system for the phone bank. What the BHC IVE cohort has proven: By being connected to an IVE network, groups are able to work through the challenges and ramp up much more quickly than if they had to do so on their own.

It has now been two years since the first cohort launched its first civic engagement program. In the most recent program in spring 2019, 80 leaders contacted almost 17,000 target voters in six counties: Los Angeles, Santa Ana, San Diego, Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Tulare. And they fit the profile of the emerging electorate: 88 percent of voters contacted are people of color: 57 percent Latino, 21 percent Asian, and 10 percent African American; 41 percent are age 34 or younger, and 47 percent are making less than \$50,000.

Of those contacted, 14,365 said that they were supportive of the issue(s) that they were asked about: Hmong Innovating Politics, Khmer Girls in Action, Mid-City CAN, and Pomona Economic Opportunity Center polled on tax equity; Fathers and Families of San Joaquin on alternatives to youth incarceration; Community Water Center on a public water system; Latino Health Access on access to safe and healthy housing; and Pilipino Worker Center on the voter power of the Filipino community.

Sources: Interviews with Monica Embrey, California Calls, 2017; Marjon Kashani, California Calls, 2019; Lian Cheun, Khmer Girls in Action, 2017; Joey Williams, Faith in the Valley, 2017; Erica Fernandez, Community Water Center, 2019; Benjamin Wood and Karen Kandamby, Pomona Economic Opportunity Center, 2019. CA Calls and PICO. 2019. "Updated Integrated Voter Engagement Cohort Concept Paper;" California Calls. 2019. Initial Analysis of IVE Cohort Spring Impact. Los Angeles, CA: California Calls

Looking Ahead:

10 Ways Funders Can Support IVE

We usually end our reports with recommendations for organizers, practitioners, and funders. This report is an exception: Since we have focused on documenting the story of IVE in the Golden State, and we think that holding up that mirror is the best way of disseminating best practices to the field, we focus here on ten recommendations to funders.

1. Set sights on an inclusive democracy and governing power

Some funders may shy away from electoral work for being too political. After all, partisan politics and GOTV efforts are usually about running candidates and passing propositions. A central premise of IVE, though, is a recognition that a focus on government is not enough—rather that a strategy for governance gets us closer to a vision of inclusion and justice for all. IVE is about holding candidates accountable once they take their post, ensuring the intent of a winning proposition and, most importantly, the funding that follows reaches under-resourced communities and improves lives.

And it is not really a departure from one's stated mission. For example, The California Endowment has learned that a vibrant and inclusive democracy goes hand-in-hand with its mission as a health foundation. Building organizing and IVE capacity among historically-excluded populations is not only a smart investment as a driver of change—but it is also the change that is needed. It is part of a vision for a healthy community. Funders can also look to the movement-building field for inspiration: The movement is comprised of a diversity of organizations of varying resources and capacities with different missions, constituencies, and issues. Yet in coming together around IVE, they do not have to set aside their individual organizational priorities; in fact, when done well, it gives more muscle to their work and their issues while also building towards a collective goal.

2. Pool resources and play to strengths

Pooled funds and collaborative initiatives are ways for foundations to stretch limited grant dollars and to have impact beyond what they can achieve alone. It also allows them to stay in their lane—both in terms of topic and in terms of not being too directive to the organizers who know their communities best. They can also provide opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, shared inquiries and trainings, and field evaluation and reflection. An example of this: 10 funders formed the California Civic Participation Funders, put this into practice, and funded civic participation work in four counties: Orange, San Diego, San Bernardino, and Riverside. In

addition, they publicized lessons learned for philanthropy in the report *Bolder Together* (Cha and Woodwell, Jr. 2016; Woodwell, Jr. 2012).

In addition to expanding impact, working collaboratively can minimize the risk—or, maybe more accurately, share risk. If taking a step towards voter engagement is too much of a leap for a board of trustees, a collaborative can be a more viable vehicle for experimentation and exploration. Especially for smaller foundations or for a more conservative and non-risk-taking institution, funding alone probably means funding few organizations. It may be like placing bets on a few winners—and if one of them does not win, it could threaten further funding. By working collaboratively, more funds are available for disseminating across more organizations thus reducing the chances of a “bad bet” and improving the likelihood of a positive outcome.

3. Support strategic centers and alignment processes

This recommendation is not about funding a new central institution or elevating one favored organization as leader—though, it may be the case in some situations. It is more about supporting the facilitation and alignment of grassroots players in ways that build a shared power analysis and multi-year IVE strategy that both hits their individual goals as well as their shared goal. In some cases, it might call for a regional table to play that role in the ways that Engage San Diego and the Orange County Civic Engagement Table do in their respective regions. Or it might call for a coordinating committee like the early days of California Calls and Mobilize the Immigrant Vote, which has since merged with YVote to form Power California. California Native Vote Project, for instance, is playing such a role for engaging Native American voters that not a place-based approach but is a population-focused approach—in the same way that YVote was focused on young voters.

While today many of these efforts have evolved into permanent organizations, they usually get their start as a series of exploratory conversations, shared analyses, and early experiments—and it is that process and generative role—in whatever form it takes—that we call for in this recommendation. While the basic steps of IVE implementation are the same, the contexts and organizations involved are always different. So the science of numbers (the number of voter contacts to expect from each hour of door knocking and the number of supportive voters to expect from 10 voter contacts) are different in Los Angeles than they are in San Bernardino. And the messages that resonate in San Francisco will not resonate in Fresno. Bringing together that learning will lead to greater capacity more quickly than if left in siloes and isolation.

4. Double down on equity

California’s history can offer a pathway forward for a nation at unease with demographic shifts, political polarization, and economic uncertainty. Once weighted down with the same trends 40 years ago, some in California’s political leadership thought their own political futures would benefit from division by race and nativity. It worked for a while, but it eventually

became a tired trope—and one hopes that this will be the case for America as well. Still, it is only within the past decade or so that we have been able to more firmly shift the trajectory of the state towards a more just and inclusive future. And grassroots leadership from the most impacted communities had had a hand in making that shift possible. Change will not “trickle down” from those in charge; rather it will bubble up from those with the most to gain.

To make sure that happens, funders should look at their grant-making strategies through a lens of equity. These times call for a loud and direct commitment to equity—both in values and in dollar amounts. This means paying attention to and addressing historical inequalities underlying today’s conditions, rebalancing power in grant decision making, and mitigating future harm on those populations and communities that have been excluded from democracy and opportunity either explicitly or implicitly through unexamined biases and beliefs. There are many dimensions of equity, such as racial/ethnic, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, health, and economic. New to equity? Start with one and find your peers because there is an emerging focus on equity within philanthropy.

5. Find your own on-ramp to IVE

There are many ways to support IVE because many needs go overlooked and under-resourced. If your institution cannot fund an IVE program or strategy, find the components of it that you can. One tangible contribution: Fund the equipment, staffing, and capacity for phone banking and for managing data. The predictive dialer technology that is critical for getting to scale often requires an overhaul of an organization’s internet and telecommunications systems—in addition to the laptops, cell phones, and all the other equipment. That can be a large, one-time contribution paying dividends for years to come—or at least until the technology needs to be upgraded. Other ways to support the field are to establish a network of technical assistance providers who can shore up an organization’s financial systems, legal paperwork, and administrative systems.

Moving the needle on issues is also another on-ramp to IVE. As the field has found, IVE brings more leverage to the issues of concern. While it is always our recommendation to lead with the communities’ issues over your own, legal realities require fiduciary responsibilities to a philanthropic mission. So what is needed is the time to find authentic intersections between communities’ interests and your own. As The California Endowment learned five years into its Building Healthy Communities initiative, it had to broaden its definition of health equity to be truly responsive to community issues around education reform, criminal justice, and gentrification. And in doing so it had spillover effects into the field of organizing—in particular, providing a health equity frame that allowed for the connection of previously disparate issues as well as for a new stress on healing and health for communities and organizers alike (Pastor, Terriquez, and Lin 2018).

6. Fund organizing capacity

Organizing is a prerequisite for IVE. So strengthening the field of IVE first requires a strong organizational and organizing foundation upon which to layer on voter engagement.

Organizers develop people into constituents for change and active participants in policy making and systems change (Bovaird 2007; Kirshner 2015; Mitlin 2008; Rogers et al. 2012).

Unlike service provision which equips individuals with the tools to adapt to their current circumstance, organizing equips individuals with the tools and skills to fundamentally alter their conditions to be more responsive to their current needs (Christens and Speer 2015).

Organizing is focused on partnering with people from oppressed communities to change the calculus of power; to force power brokers to share their decision making with those people whose life it impacts.

Funding is always needed for the day-to-day work of following up with people, talking with them, and bringing them into a membership base. This is not a linear process; it is relational and fundamentally requires building trust. Because grant deliverables are often tied to policy campaigns and voter engagement funds tied to voter turnout, the core organizing and leadership development work often go under-resourced, even as it is the basis for all other work. Furthermore, IVE is best implemented when there is a pool of trained canvassers from under-represented communities who deeply and personally understand why the issues in an election matters—and that is the base building and political education work that happens long before (and after) elections.

7. Support peer-to-peer leadership and learning

This work requires strong leadership mixed with the humility to recognize that there is a lot to learn from others—and at times to set aside an organization’s own issues in service to the collaborative. In Orange County, the California Civic Participation Funders provided dedicated resources for leadership support and organizational development for each of the individual groups at the table. And attention was paid to three levels of leadership: individual, organizational, and coalitional. Without these ingredients, the learning curve and growth trajectory would likely have been much longer and slower.

For foundations that may not be as comfortable with the campaigns and lobbying, quiet funding that allows for the development of new leadership and peer cohorts (e.g., Rockwood Leadership Institute) is just as essential to the evolution and expansion of the ecosystem. Furthermore, preparing people to step into new leadership roles—inside and outside of government—is a long-term investment towards the inclusive democracy and governing power that we call for in the first recommendation.

8. Get curious around cultural shifting over message shaping

Traditional electoral campaigns develop messages to win at the polls. And they are developed to win the majority of likely voters—not the majority of Californians. Polling and messaging all get tuned to the tone and tenor of the majority electorate—and issues of race are avoided and considered a “wedge” issue. Yet Ian Haney-Lopez, Demos, and ASO Communications have found that putting race at the center of messaging is actually critical to success. PICO California has been working with the Haas Institute at UC Berkeley to use “belonging” as a unifying message to engage Californians. Engaging our full electorate will mean changing the dominant narrative so that all Californians see themselves in it.

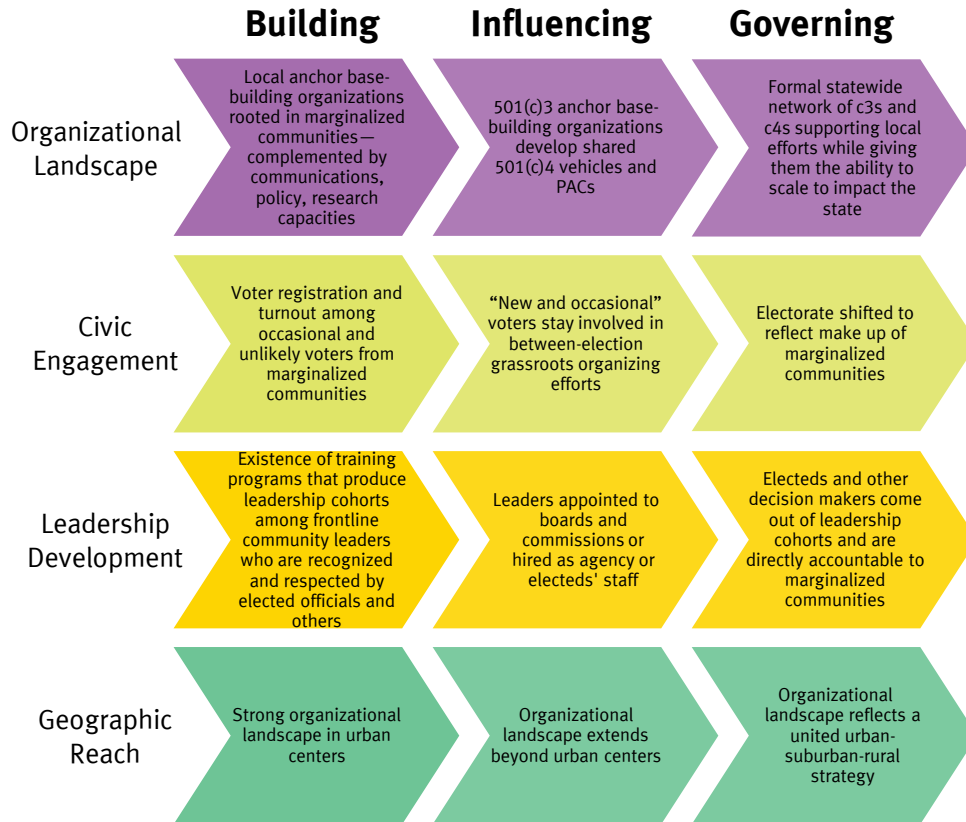
Deeper than messaging and narrative change is the work around cultural change that is centered on underrepresented voices. Power California, for example, is part of a growing movement exploring the intersection of power building and culture shifting. While it includes the arts and narrative change, it is about fundamental changes to society about the “how, what, and why of what we know and believe” (Sen 2019:5).

9. Redefine the measures and scale of progress

What we have proposed in this report is a means by which historically marginalized and vulnerable populations have increased influence and power to shape California at the local and state levels. This is rooted in an analysis that certain populations have been intentionally marginalized and excluded from democratic processes and decision making—and that intentional strategies are needed to address that imbalance. This suggests a greater need for metrics for an ecosystem for change over metrics for an electoral campaign. And any metrics framework needs to be flexible enough to take into account varying and dynamic conditions, capacities, and rules of the game as they apply in different places throughout the state.

This means metrics and evaluation towards an ecosystem-based, values-centric, and multi-dimensional approach—because the goals are at a higher level than any one organization. These measures should focus on the strength and effectiveness of the movement ecosystem to influence, and ultimately attain, decision-making power, on and off election cycles. To get there means building organizing capacity rooted in those communities so as to build grassroots power and leadership; it means building alignment among organizing groups around a strategic agenda; and it means building collective power among those groups to be able to influence state governance—negotiating a governing agenda with the traditional power brokers. By now it may be clear that this means measuring what may sometimes seem more fuzzy: leadership development, coalitional strength, a strategy for scale, and so on. Power comes through turning people out to the polls but also from the transformation of people and organizations (Goldman et al. 2018). See Figure 2 for a sample metrics frame.

Figure 2. SAMPLE METRICS FRAMEWORK



Source: Ginny Goldman, Jennifer Ito, Kirk Noden, Manuel Pastor, and Madeline Wander. March 2018. *Power and Possibilities: A Changing States Approach to Arizona, Georgia, and Minnesota*. <https://dornsife.usc.edu/perc/power-and-possibilities>

10. Share the story of IVE

Despite the power of IVE, deep knowledge about the strategies and successes often seem limited to an engaged group of funders and movement builders. Even when a surprising political victory is achieved—raising taxes under Proposition 30, reducing incarceration under Proposition 47, protecting immigrants under the California Values Act—pundits and analysts will attribute the win to a savvy politician, a catchy piece of rhetoric, or a viral social media meme. The long-term patient work of mobilizing a new electorate is too often left out of journalistic and academic accounts.

But revealing this hidden history is exactly what is needed to attract more resources, engage more residents, and allow movements and organizers to develop the confidence to move to the next frontier of social justice. If this history is not clear, funds will be misdirected, success will be limited, and social change will be stalled. Lifting up the power and science of IVE is exactly what we have endeavored to do in this research report—but more stories are needed, more data should be amassed, and more audiences need to be moved.

Finally, we offer a bonus recommendation: **Provide grants for multi-year, core-operating support.** Funders may see this as a perennial favorite—grantees bring it up any chance they get because such security would certainly make their lives easier. But such a recommendation has a particular salience in the arena of integrated voter engagement: IVE requires a stable and predictable kind of funding that bucks the boom-and-bust cycle of typical voter mobilization efforts.

For 15 years, The James Irvine Foundation has modeled how to deliver such funding for community organizing groups, allowing them to grow their organization organically and build their capacity to run voter engagement programs. Many other foundations, including The California Endowment and others, have become convinced of the need for such funding stability to thread together all forms of civic engagement.

We are hopeful that one day we may not have to include this last admonition because operational funding will have become standard practice. Meanwhile, it is important that social change depends on long-term strategies, successful movements, and the solid support needed to experiment, learn, and grow. Certainly, that has been the case with IVE where the ability to try different formations, different technologies, and different issue sets has created a sophisticated capacity to move a state forward—and provide an example for other states.

Conclusion: 2020 and Beyond

In many ways, California is America fast forward. The state's demographic changes between 1980 and 2000 are the shifts being experienced by the U.S. between 2000 and 2050.

California's economic changes also point the way to an uneasy national future: We are both the beating heart of the new economy and the bleeding heart of homelessness, embodying the countrywide dilemma of inequality amidst prosperity. And our political history was a preview of the whip-saw of change that saw America ricochet from a President Obama to a President Trump: The state that once exported tax cuts, anti-immigrant laws, and a penchant for over-incarceration now seems to be leading on raising the minimum wage, guaranteeing immigrant rights, and addressing climate change.

California—which was once a demonstration problem for what can go wrong when demographic distance, polarized politics, and economic uncertainty get the better of you—is now poised to show what can happen when you make your way to getting it right. Integrated voter engagement—though not the entire key to both winning and wielding power to improve people's lives—is an important capacity to develop in multiple locales. It is a tool for thoughtfully working with young people, communities of color, immigrants, LGBTQ individuals and families, and so many others to bring them fully into civic life and to insist that civic life involves not just voting but also the gamut of other activities that community-based organizations can support them in doing.

But it would be naïve to end this report without acknowledging that this will be a fight. Fredrick Douglass once put it that “power concedes nothing without a demand.” Expanding the electorate means older generations sharing power—and that means, at the very least, conflict, if not the fight we are seeing play out across our national stage right now. Race and racism are also central to this story: The racial generation gap, the difference between the share of seniors who are white and the share of youth who are of color, peaked in California in the 1990s era of “racial propositions” and it is peaking in the U.S. right now.

So while IVE is the tool, it will take determination, resilience, and soul to deeply do this work of connecting communities and expanding our democracy. California will soon have an opportunity to do exactly that: In 2020, the ballot will include a measure to reform Proposition 13 and direct revenue to schools and neighborhood services. Key to winning that battle—to reinforcing the role of the public sector in providing individuals, families, and communities to get the tools and support they need to thrive—will be an even more robust commitment to engaging new and occasional voters.

Such a win would benefit California not just through the enhanced revenue but also through demonstrating the enhanced voice and power of those communities so often left behind. To tackle the next set of challenges facing the Golden State—to move from a housing crisis to the end of homelessness, from income insecurity to an age of abundance, from mass incarceration to mass liberation—California must become not just a state of resistance but also a state of renewal. And investing in the VOTE—voting, organizing, transformation, and engagement—will get us one step closer to that California Dream.

List of Interviewees

We thank the individuals listed below for their time and wisdom shared through phone interviews. We note their organizational affiliations at the time of the interviews.

Ismahan Abdullahi, Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans
Lian Cheun, Khmer Girls in Action
Kevin Cosney, California Calls
Tom Dolan, Inland Congregations United for Change
Monica Embrey, California Calls
Felicia Jones, Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement
Karen Kandamby, Pomona Economic Opportunity Center
Marjon Kashani, California Calls
Christina Livingston, Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment
Jennifer Lyle, Building Blocks for Kids
Ashley Malouf, Sacramento ACT
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Henry Perez, Inner City Struggle
Amado Uno, Asian Pacific Environmental Network
Thomas Weiler, Faith in the Valley
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Kevin Malone, San Diego Organizing Project
Joseph Tomás McKellar, PICO California
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