Grant #: 376603

The Cleveland Foundation
Final Grant Report
Promise of Democracy Foundation

Grant ID: 376603
Purpose of Grant: Promise of Democracy Cleveland Black Future Fund Capacity Grant
Grant Amount: $25,000.00
Grant Period From: 5/1/2021 to 4/30/2022
Contact Person: Gregory T. Moore
Contact Person Phone: (216) 217-1411
E-mail: gregmoore151@gmail.com

Anticipated Outcomes (Outlined in Award Letter)
Promise of Democracy Cleveland Black Future Fund Capacity Grant

1. Describe the results of your project/program/activity outcomes.
   A. Post Covid 19 Program Sustainability: The Promise of Democracy Foundation was able to maintain sustainable operations throughout the entire grant period thanks in large part to the Cleveland Foundation’s Black Future Fund grant. The $25,000 grant provided much needed resources while our organization was still handicapped by the Covid ongoing pandemic. The Black Future Fund strengthened our administrative and operational capacity which allowed us to more effectively carry out other civic engagement grants and program obligations.

   B. Organizational Strategic Planning and Program Redesign: We were also able to begin the long overdue process of long-term organizational sustainability planning that had been put off for several years. We were able to utilize academic strategic planning models to develop new program management procedures. Organizational goals and objectives canvas charts were developed to plot our plans for returning to full operations and staffing once the pandemic comes to an end. PDF participated in three fundraising and organizational development webinars/seminars that were conducted by CANDID. Through PDF’s participation, we were able to develop a Program Logic Model based on our organization’s needs assessments, revised goals, inputs, outputs, short and long-term programmatic outcomes.

   C. (Post Covid) Community Re-Engagement: PDF was able to implement a full Ohio Redistricting Education and Awareness Program as a follow up to our Census 2020 program that was also underwritten by the Cleveland Foundation. We were able to partner with a number of organizations who were working on this issue, most notably the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission (OCRC) where the president of the Promise of Democracy Foundation was asked to serve as co-chair. A total of nine virtual Hearings of the OCRC took place between May and September 2021 where we heard testimonies from citizens across the state with over 500 virtual participants joining in.

PDF’s Redistricting awareness work included participation in multiple hearings of the official Ohio Redistricting Commission (ORC) held at Cleveland State University, Cuyahoga Community College and in Columbus Ohio at the Ohio Statehouse.

   D. Development of Academic Partnerships: One of our goals of the project was to build academic partnerships. This was achieved with our numerous research, policy forums and issue awareness events that were conducted in partnerships with academic institutions.

   A Venture Canvas chart and Analytical Narrative was developed with the Ohio University Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service. Working through the development of this chart and narrative via an academic class
project helped PDF sort through all of the strategic components that would be necessary for enhancing our professional program and organizational development.

As part of our redistricting partnership with the OCRC, geographic research, geo mapping, data collection and analysis was undertaken in conjunction with the OCRC, Ohio State University’s Department of Math and the MGGG Redistricting Lab Research Group at the Tisch College of Tufts University.

E. Expanding Public Policy Analysis Impacting African Americans and underserved communities. PDF also made redistricting education and awareness presentations in a number of public forums including: Kent State University’s Race, Place and Political Boundaries Forum as part of Kent’s Race and Democracy in Northeast Ohio Series on September 21, 2021, and the Neighborhood Leadership Institute’s Civics Workshop Series on Redistricting that was held on October 4, 2021 and moderated by Meridith Turner, and Realltalk with the League of Women Voters, moderated by Rick Jackson, WCLV/WKSU Ideastream on September 1, 2021.

PDF in conjunction with the Ohio Voter Fund (OVF) was able to provide staffing and program support to the other programs including PDF’s Environmental/Climate Justice Education and Awareness program as part of a $25,000 grant from the Ohio Climate Justice Fund. As the Covid 19 restrictions began to be lifted, PDF conducted 3 Listen Lead and Share Community Listening Sessions on December 2, 2021, in conjunction with the Lee-Harvard Community Center, on March 24, 2022, in conjunction with Ohio Black Environmentalists and Unbar, and on Earth Day 2022, held on April 22 in conjunction with the National Wildlife Federation.

F. PDF in conjunction with the Ohio Voter Fund was able to fully participate in Cleveland Votes’ Monthly Equitable Democracy virtual networking gatherings and activities. We were also able to participate in National Voter Registration Day in September 2021 in conjunction with Cleveland Votes partners. Throughout the year OVF also assisted the League of Women Voters in the distribution of 5,000 voter guides throughout the Cleveland area for the August 3rd Special Congressional Election and September 9th Primary Election in 2021.

G. Digital Program Development. PDF was able to update its website with more up to date content and made greater use of platforms like Facebook and Eventbrite to promote community events and the dissemination of reports, issue alerts and other information related to the upcoming elections. In July 2021 PDF coordinated outreach for a community hybrid watch party during the Cleveland Mayoral Debate highlighting Climate Justice issues in conjunction with the Great Lakes Alliance and the Ohio Environmental Council.

PDF contracted with a local firm Digizoom to conduct interviews with a number of Black environmental activists in the Cleveland area to help define “What does Climate Justice mean to me?” Videos were to be edited and presented in a digital forum for sharing across multiple platforms to advance awareness of the issue. In April 2022 PDF partnered with the National Wildlife Federation on an Earth Day Virtual Community Forum and Listening Session where we were able to reach out to participates from across the state including Cleveland, Akron, Toledo, Columbus, and Cincinnati.

2. If there were any unanticipated outcomes, outcomes that exceeded expectations, outcomes that fell short of expectations, or changes that had to be made to the project, please describe the circumstances and impact.
   Anticipated outcomes,
   Thanks to the sustainability funding from the Black Future Fund, we were able to better conduct community engagement and issue awareness and advocacy programs centered around environmental/Climate Justice, Redistricting Reform, and equitable democracy projects in conjunction with our various partners.
The funding helped to maintain and strengthen our administrative and program operations that were suffering from the covid 19 pandemic. By participating in a variety of hearings and forums we were also able to successfully make the connection between the work PDF had undertaken with the US Census awareness program in 2020 (underwritten by the Cleveland Foundation) and the Redistricting and Reapportionment process that was to follow in 2021 and into 2022.

Through the expanded distribution of the League of Women Voters (LWV) Voter Guides, PDF and OVFi were able to help voters navigate through the confusion of two back-to-back elections in August and September of 2021. We also fulfilled our program goal of lifting up key issues in the special congressional elections through field outreach in targeted neighborhoods in Cleveland, (Buckeye-Woodland, Woodhill, Mount Pleasant, Lee-Harvard, Seville, Shaker Square, Larchmere, Collinwood, Lakeshore Drive), East Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, and Garfield Hts.

Outcomes that exceeded expectations:
1) Our extensive work on redistricting reform dramatically expanded into a full-scale community engagement program that was not anticipated. It included co-chairing the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission (OCRC) and participating in a number of in person community forums, hearings and rallies in Cleveland and Columbus. The Redistricting process dragged on well past the established deadlines that had been anticipated from the recent reforms.

2) As a result, our Census and Redistricting awareness program was strengthened and allowed PDF to extend its engagement thanks to Black Future Funding that allowed us to do more despite the limited amount of funding we were able to raise for Redistricting awareness program.

3) We were able to be more visible and present in community events like Common Ground and candidates’ forums despite the lingering pandemic. PDF was able to stay involved with coalitions like Cleveland Votes, Ohio Climate Justice Fund, Fair Districts Ohio, Equal Districts Ohio, the Ohio Voting Rights Coalition, and the Soul of Philanthropy, Celebrate those who Give Black awards programs.

Outcomes that fell short of expectations

- Reduction in the number of available staff willing to work or volunteer during the pandemic
- We were not able to make the major equipment updates of computers, LCD projectors and other supplies.
- We were unable to retain the digital organizer we had contracted to coordinate our on-line and digital programs and promotional efforts.
- While we were able to secure more program grant dollars for Climate and Redistricting programs, we were unable to leverage significant additional funds for this particular effort or to institute a more robust fund development strategic program.

Changes that had to be made to the project, please describe the circumstances and impact
In the areas of voter engagement, we experienced a number of retirements and longtime staffers quitting in light of the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic. Many long-time staff and volunteers also expressed major concerns with conducting voter outreach in-person door to door canvassing and other events in increasingly high crime ridden neighborhoods. The safety of our staff and volunteers remained our top priority as we are developing new models of civic engagement.
Many of our most devoted workers moved on to other organizations and other less labor-intensive program interests. This limited our ability to conduct robust voter engagement field programs like voter registration and door to door GOTV programs that we had conducted in past election cycles. Instead we utilized direct mail to voters we had registered, text messaging when lists were available and distribution of voters guides to neighborhood businesses, faith based and community centers. 

3. Will this project/program/activity continue past the grant period?
Yes

3a. How will it be funded in the future?
   ) Yes, once we get past the redistricting process (which unexpectedly dragged far into 2022) we will re-shift our focus to the Fund Development and Board development aspects of our project that were postponed due to the need to complete redistricting advocacy programmatic obligations.

   We are in the process of developing a comprehensive program proposal that will be solicited in Ohio as well as seek funding from national and regional funding sources who support voter engagement, democracy reform and climate justice efforts.

3b. Will there be significant changes based on learning from work completed during the grant period, or from other/new information or circumstances?
   Yes, in light of some of our staffing challenges we will also be expanding our focus on election administration and raising awareness and understanding of the new congressional and legislative districts that have just been created.

   With prospects for a number of ballot measures on the Ohio ballot this November and even next year, we will resume our efforts to re-establish our Ohio Community Newsletter and Voter Guides to help assist voters in understanding the boundaries of their new congressional and legislative districts. We will also place a focus on the key referendum issues at stake on the ballot and their impact on the African American and underserved community.

   In terms of changes to the program, we want to use the literary arts to help tell the full story of the multi-year voting rights and redistricting reform struggles in Ohio over these last several years. Specifically, we want to promote literature, articles, studies, and develop educational materials and programs that helps to inform emerging advocates across the state about lessons learned and best practices for undertaking democratic reforms and standing up to voter suppression tactics.

   PDF will also develop programs that emphasize the importance of greater utilization of election administration and voting procedures that currently exist including on-line voter registration, early vote, expanded mail in and absentee balloting. Messaging will be developed that encourages underrepresented community that “Their Vote Still Matters!”

4. If other funding was sought for this project, did it come through as expected? Explain any adjustment to the project as a result of increased or decreased funding.