

## **Nonprofits Engaging Voters: Making Every Voice Matter in 2024**

### **Background**

Healthy communities rely on the civic health of residents who feel a stake in the future of their government and community. Civic health begins with voting, yet voter participation in Illinois reveals persistent disparities, with younger, economically disadvantaged and minority groups continually underrepresented. Research shows that community-based nonprofits can bridge this gap through nonpartisan civic education and voter engagement efforts, boosting voter participation among underrepresented groups by as much as eleven percentage points<sup>i</sup>. The purpose of this project is to help build the capacity of nonprofits to carry out successful nonpartisan civic education and voter engagement activities. It also aims to test the effectiveness of different types of civic education models for developing a civic mindset and increasing voter participation among young voters. This will be achieved through a series of nonpartisan voter engagement forums co-delivered by the research team and participating nonprofits.

### **Sponsorship**

This project is funded by the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN) Social Innovation program, and has been approved by the Office of Research Compliance and Integrity at both NIU and UIC. If your organization is interested in participating but still have questions or concerns, we encourage you to submit an application and reach out to one of the members of the research team.

### **Nonprofits participating in this initiative will receive from the NIU/UIC Research Team:**

- A civic engagement grant of up to \$4,000
- Materials and support needed to carry out a one-hour nonpartisan voter engagement event targeted toward 18-26 year olds (but open to anyone served by your agency who is eligible to vote)
- A report on the impact of your voter engagement event

### **Nonprofit participants must agree to:**

- Host and deliver two 60-75 minute voter education forums at their organization within the same week
- Invite persons served by your organization to attend one of the voter engagement events using scripts and instructions provided by the research team, aiming for 75 participants each session. Organizations can hold multiple, smaller forums if necessary, with the end goal of having 150 different forum participants

- Communicate the follow information so that participants can decide whether or not to attend (the information can be provided via mass email, flyers, social media or combination of methods and the research team will provide text/suggested language)
  - Each participant will be compensated \$20 upon completion of the forum. Participants must be:
    - Persons served by your organization in the last year
    - Willing to complete a short (3-5 minute) survey before and after the event
    - Willing to provide their name, birthdate and address so that the research team can determine through post-election voter file matching whether the program was successful
  - Participants may attend only one forum.
- Designate a staff person to help lead the voter engagement events. The research team will provide training and day-of support
- Work with the research team as necessary to provide/verify any missing or unclear participant contact information from forum participants to enable voter file matching

### To Apply:

Nonprofit organizations interested in participating should complete the following online form by August 28thth: <https://forms.gle/qYgK77QKSLuBEFTt6>

Please note that all efforts related to this project must be conducted on a **nonpartisan** basis. The research team and participating organizations are prohibited from directly or indirectly supporting or opposing any candidate for public office in our programming.

This project is led faculty and students the Department of Public Administration at Northern Illinois University (NIU) and the Department of Public Policy, Management, and Analytics at University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the members of the research team, Dr. Julie Langer [jlanger@niu.edu](mailto:jlanger@niu.edu) or Dr. Kelly LeRoux [kleroux@uic.edu](mailto:kleroux@uic.edu)

### Timeline

- Interested participants submit information via online link above, by Friday, August 28th
- Participant agencies are selected and notified by September 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Sign partnership agreement/receive grant: September 9<sup>th</sup>
- Logistics (scheduling, etc.) arranged with participating agencies and training provided to agency staff helping to co-deliver voter engagement forums: Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> to Sept. 26<sup>th</sup>
- Civic education forums held at participating agencies Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> through Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>
- Research team conducts necessary follow up, voter file match, and assessment of impact: (Nov 6<sup>th</sup> to March, 2025)

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<sup>i</sup> LeRoux, Kelly, Julie Langer, and Samantha Plotner (2022). Nonprofit Messaging and the 2020 Election: Findings from a Nonpartisan Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) Field Experiment. *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, 14(2): 157-183. <https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2021-0062>  
 LeRoux, Kelly and Kelly Krawczyk (2014). Can Nonprofit Organizations Increase Voter Turnout? Findings from an Agency-Based Voter Mobilization Experiment. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 43(2): 272-292. <https://doi-org.proxy.cc.uic.edu/10.1177/0899764012459909>