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The Minneapolis Foundation awards \$275,000 in voter engagement grants

Funding will support 13 nonprofit organizations that serve underrepresented communities

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. — With the 2016 presidential election just around the corner, grassroots organizers and volunteers across Minneapolis are already working hard to make sure that voters from every corner of the community have the resources they need to learn about the issues and make it to the polls on November 8.

The Minneapolis Foundation is pitching in. The Foundation has announced \$275,000 in grants to increase voter engagement, especially in populations with historically low turnout. While Minneapolis prides itself on high voter turnout, the city's 2012 election analysis showed that voter turnout varied dramatically by neighborhood, with precinct turnout ranging from 59 percent to 92 percent.

These grants will support nonpartisan get-out-the vote efforts focusing on citizens whose voices too often go unheard. The selected grantees have deep year-round connections in the communities they serve. Their constituents include residents of North Minneapolis and other low-income neighborhoods, immigrants of color, American Indians, public housing residents, and the homeless.

The grants, which will support the work of 13 nonprofits, reflect the Minneapolis Foundation's commitment to fostering civic engagement in the Twin Cities. "Communities thrive as more people participate in our democracy," said Catherine Gray, the Foundation's Director of Impact Strategy for Civic Engagement. "Voting is a critical launch point for empowering people to speak up on the issues that affect their lives."

To maximize their effectiveness, the organizations that received funding will work together as a cohort led by Minnesota Voice, a nonprofit with expertise in data collection and nonpartisan

get-out-the-vote efforts. Minnesota Voice is part of a national network working toward social, racial, and economic justice by increasing civic engagement and voter participation.

The organizations that received grants are as follows:

- Asian American Organizing Project
- CAPI USA
- Harrison Neighborhood Association
- Jewish Community Action
- Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council
- Native American Community Development Institute
- NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center, Inc.
- Open Access Connections
- Pillsbury United Communities
- Sabathani Community Center
- Urban Homeworks
- Voices for Racial Justice
- West Bank Community Coalition

These groups join three others—Ka Joog, Minnesota Voice, and Neighborhoods Organizing for Change—that were previously awarded funding for 2016 voter engagement work in the Minneapolis Foundation’s main annual competitive grant round.

Grant recipients will use the Foundation’s support to engage the populations they serve in a variety of innovative ways. For example, Voices for Racial Justice plans use its grant to help incarcerated Minnesotans energize and organize their personal networks to vote. Although in Minnesota, people in prison cannot vote, their families and friends can. “We know that what drives people to participate in elections is a sense of working for change that matters to them,” said Vina Kay, Executive Director of Voices for Racial Justice. “For families and communities impacted by incarceration, some of the change they want has to do with policing, sentencing, the corrections system, and re-entry opportunities.”

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About the Minneapolis Foundation: For 100 years, the Minneapolis Foundation has connected people, resources, and ideas to improve lives, locally and globally. The Foundation manages more than \$700 million in assets, providing customized and tax-smart giving solutions that result in the average annual distribution of more than \$50 million in grants. The Foundation brings people together to unite behind common goals and spark positive change in our community. www.minneapolisfoundation.org