

TIDES

ADVOCACY

HEALTHY DEMOCRACY ACTION FUND

Building Political Power

Tides Advocacy's Healthy Democracy Action Fund is an initiative committed to fundamentally shifting the balance of power in U.S. politics by building the influence of Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color (BIPOC) with a focus on mobilizing for elections, demanding policy change, and shaping the public agenda.

To date, the Healthy Democracy Action Fund (HDAF) has awarded \$7 million to more than 50 BIPOC-led organizations that are building multi-cycle, independent political power. Throughout 2020 and 2021, HDAF partners have worked to shift our political system towards equity, from building co-governance models between community members and elected officials, to developing a pipeline for representative political candidates, to electing progressive, reflective representatives at all levels of government.

Our partners are growing a permanent base of community members that are advancing progressive, transformative change.

THE OPPORTUNITY: EARLY INVESTMENT IN POWER BUILDING

Strong BIPOC-led organizations are foundational to securing progressive wins now in a way that catalyzes transformative advocacy victories in the long-term. And, funding these efforts well in advance of elections helps to solidify winning campaign plans, address critical staffing needs, and ensure rigorous political engagement towards electoral justice in 2022 and beyond.

Healthy Democracy Action Fund partners are building multi-cycle political power by growing a progressive base of support, demanding accountability for progressive policy change, and engaging in elections to increase the influence of BIPOC communities in policymaking.

Centering historically excluded communities in long-term political strategy and base-building not only helped secure important electoral wins but is also shifting the overall political system. In Wisconsin, HDAF grantees that addressed voter suppression and mobilized around progressive candidates in 2020 up and down the ballot are also leading the fight against gerrymandered maps through strategic litigation.

BIPOC-led, power building organizations and social movements have shown time and again their growing influence in local and state politics and the political process, with national implications. For example, in Arizona we supported the Tribal Working Group at AZ Wins, which saw a significant increase in native communities' political participation, building local power through the 2020 electoral outcomes. In Georgia, we supported the Asian American Advocacy Fund, and saw how the Asian-American vote played a decisive role in congressional races and the presidential election.

Building long-term political progressive power can help safeguard community wellbeing and advance a social justice agenda, especially as we continue to face the impact of COVID-19, attacks on voting rights, key legislative battles, and suppression of progressive voices. Above all, we need sustained, vigorous participation of those directly affected by injustice and those disaffected with a political system that benefits from their exclusion.

OUR STRATEGY

HDAF will focus on geographies where there is a capacity to transform state and local policy terrains for more progressive, inclusive outcomes. These are states where there's high potential to build long-term political power and grow the advocacy influence of BIPOC communities.

HDAF's approach considers shifting demographics; the importance of developing BIPOC community and political leaders; the need to change state rules to promote a healthy democracy; and high-potential targets for delivering on a social justice policy agenda. In this context, we recognize that community-based, BIPOC-led groups hold both deep wisdom and community relationships driving long-term change.

Our goals are to:

1. Grow the influence of BIPOC communities over political processes consistent with social justice principles, with a focus on under-represented and under-funded sectors.
2. Build momentum to transform democratic participation, representation, and accountability in key states towards permanent progressive politics through multi-year integrated voter engagement and organizing.

HDAF will support multi-year, year-round civic engagement and organizing work in key states and transformative strategies for centering BIPOC-led movements in the broader political process.

Our partnerships will be attentive to two signals of progress:

1. BIPOC communities exercise greater influence over policymaking, with elected officials increasingly responsive and accountable to them. More equitable representation is driven by strong, year-round community organizing, political leadership development, and direct advocacy work.
2. BIPOC-led mobilization drives and sustains a shift towards progressive governance and accountability in key states. Early signals include increased turnout around candidates and ballot measures that advance shifts in the criminal legal system, environmental and economic justice, racial justice, immigrant rights, and reproductive justice.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

- ***Promote a healthy democracy by making the rules fair:*** Support work where policy change and implementation can secure a healthy democracy, such as automatic voter registration, independent redistricting, strategic litigation to fight gerrymandering, re-enfranchisement for returning citizens, and policy changes to safeguard voter access and expand voting methods.
- ***Focus electoral engagement in places where having an impact up and down the ballot will contribute to tangible immediate and long-term progressive policy change:*** Our partners see how engaging at all levels can transform the political system, prioritizing voter engagement at the overlay of important competitive federal and state races with places where state legislative control and other important posts hang in the balance. This enables deep community engagement across the board, with local issues and candidates motivating turnout and a stronger, resonant progressive voice.
- ***Strengthen community voice and defend a social justice policy agenda:*** Ongoing community mobilization is critical to ensuring that electoral wins lead to policy change. We partner with organizations doing organizing and electoral work that aligns with our social and racial justice policy agenda; these groups are uniquely positioned to target electeds who obstruct progressive policy change, and support those who advance our social justice goals.

PROGRAM AREAS

1. TRANSFORMING THE POLITICAL MAP

HDAF partners with organizations that are building multi-cycle, progressive political power, demanding accountability, and advancing policy change. We work with state- and local-based groups that organize toward a long-term vision for political transformation at multiple levels of government.

We're prioritizing states where:

- Local organizations can influence several overlapping competitive elections that have significant policy implications, for both the short and long-term.
- There's an opening to transform the local and state political system within a decade towards greater government accountability to a racial and social justice agenda.
- BIPOC-led movements are growing, gaining political power, and engaging in long-term, year-round civic engagement and organizing.
- There is a gap for movement-aligned political funding.

KEY STATES

Guided by the above frame, HDAF supports organizations that are running electoral and policy field programs at the local and state level. We are committed to partnerships in states where there are strategic policy and electoral justice opportunities, and where strong BIPOC-led coalitions are transforming the political system for the long-term.

Arizona

Florida

Georgia

Michigan

Nevada

North Carolina

Pennsylvania

Wisconsin

2. STRENGTHENING POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

Black, Indigenous and people of color-led movements throughout the U.S. have built power and are continuing to advance a social justice agenda through political organizing, integrating electoral justice, policy, and community engagement work at the state and local level. They are transforming political, social, and economic structures by applying pressure locally, from holding government officials accountable long after election day by opposing harmful criminal legal system legislation, to amplifying the political leadership of communities disenfranchised by proposed state voting laws.

We are well-positioned to center locally-rooted organizing work and address critical movement gaps as community leaders shift the broader political landscape and resist the rise of authoritarianism and growing white supremacist threats.

HDAF will connect organizations with the resources they need to continue testing new strategies and to advance critical, underfunded work for broader movement building, with an eye towards increasing the political influence of under-represented communities in politically challenging contexts.

GRANTMAKING PRINCIPLES

HDAF partners are transforming our political system to advance a social and racial justice agenda, and to build long-term, independent political power. Electoral engagement is connected to a long-term vision for collective liberation, where policymaking and government practices center the lived experiences and proposals of BIPOC movement leadership.

Organizations funded by HDAF share the following guiding principles:

- Cultivate strong relationships with leaders and residents of under-represented communities for a broader and deeper base of support year-round.
- Serve and are led by communities with higher potential to grow the electorate (e.g., drop-off or occasional voters) and advance progressive policy and social change.

- Adapt tactics and tools to secure wins and advance strategy for electoral engagement, government accountability goals, and policy change.
- Use electoral engagement to accumulate experience and insights to build lasting power. Investing in building political and advocacy organizational capacity can help activists scale quickly when needed, effectively respond to opportunities, and ensure that key voices are represented in broader organizing spaces.
- Keep growing the leaders who will make a truly representative democracy. This includes programs to position community members for advancement as organizational leaders; to develop people from under-represented communities as candidates, campaign leaders, and/or staffers; and to get candidates from under-represented communities elected to local and state offices.

Healthy Democracy Action Fund is a program of Tides Advocacy, a 501(c)(4) social welfare organization.

To learn more about contributing to the Healthy Democracy Action Fund, please contact us at TAInfo@tides.org.