



**Silicon Valley Community Foundation  
Final Report to San Mateo County  
March 2024 Primary Election Voter Engagement Fund**

May 2024

This report summarizes the impacts of the March 2024 Primary Election San Mateo County Voter Engagement Fund (the Fund). The Fund awarded a total of \$203,300 to support nonpartisan, nonpolitical voter education and outreach programs in San Mateo County in the March 2024 Primary Election (the Primary).

Of the total \$150,000 contract between San Mateo County and Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF), SVCF utilized \$132,000 to award grants to 10 nonprofit organizations for voter engagement programs. Those grants supported outreach in historically underrepresented precincts in the months leading up to the Primary. An additional \$18,000 of the contract was utilized by Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) to manage the Fund. The resources contributed by the County also leveraged \$71,300 in additional grant funding from SVCF and the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund (Haas Jr. Fund) to support a further six nonprofit organizations for aligned activities.

The report begins with a final evaluation of the Fund, highlights distinctive election activities, and concludes with an assessment of the individual impacts of the Fund. A financial report for the County's contribution to the Fund is attached.

## **Final Evaluation of the Overall Collective Impact of the Fund**

### *Overall*

The nonprofit partners of the Fund were able to offer educational resources and reach a significant number of voters during the election period. They used a variety of methods, and tailored their approaches to the different communities they planned to serve. Funding was awarded through a competitive RFP process in which SVCF was able to fulfill most of the requests for funding.

The challenges primarily consisted of the limited voter interest in the election and the shorter timeline for implementation. All nonprofit partners reported that they perceived voter interest to be lower in this election. Most of the grantees focused their plan on contacting voters directly during this election period, they had mixed success at connecting with voters and generating greater interest in the election. The timeline for implementation was also very short. Funding from the County was not received by SVCF until January 10. SVCF distributed the funding as quickly as possible to the grantees, but even a few weeks earlier would have been helpful.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, the nonprofits were able to quickly design and execute outreach plans which successfully reached thousands of voters and engaged dozens of organizations throughout San Mateo County. The nonprofits reached communities across San Mateo County, and focused on precincts with a history of lower-than-average turnout. In addition to the work done by the ten nonprofit partners, Thrive Alliance ('Thrive') focused on educating other nonprofits so they could engage with their individual populations. Many of those nonprofit partners typically serve individuals in San Mateo County through direct services like housing assistance, providing food security and others.

Nine of the 10 nonprofits funded by the County were returning grantees and used similar tactical approaches to what they had implemented in previous elections. Similarly, Thrive Alliance was able to provide additional support for nonprofits, using lessons they had learned from previous voter engagement

funds how to successfully appeal to nonprofit audiences. The nonprofits largely adapted those plans to fit their own community specifics.

### *Voter Turnout*

Mirroring statewide trends, voter turnout declined in this election compared to previous Presidential primary elections (including 2020). San Mateo County recorded a higher turnout than many Bay Area Counties (including neighboring Santa Clara, Alameda, and Contra Costa). It was in the [top half of California counties](#) in terms of turnout. The final turnout of 40% was slightly higher than 2022 (38.4%) but lower than the last Presidential primary election in 2020 (54.71%). There is clearly room for the turnout to improve and it is SVCF's hope that continued investment in this program will produce long-term turnout increases.

Precinct-level turnout data shows that turnout gaps were persistent in this election. There were some bright spots, including in North Fair Oaks, where turnout was only 4% lower than the Countywide average. However, in East Palo Alto, Belle Haven and parts of Redwood City the turnout was closer to 20% - half of the Countywide average. More investment in the southern part of the County in the future could help close those gaps.

Similar trends towards persistently lower-than-average turnout exist in Daly City and South San Francisco. Some precincts were below 25% turnout, but most targeted precincts identified by the County were closer to the Countywide average. In precincts with a substantial number of Tagalog speakers, there was a slightly higher turnout than other precincts in Daly City. This could be attributed to the outreach by multiple grantees that reached Tagalog speaking voters.

## **2024 Elections Activity Summary**

Throughout the course of the grant period, SVCF staff worked with County staff to coordinate the activities of the organizations in the Fund. The RFP was open in November and decisions were announced shortly after the contract was finalized in December. 16 of the 18 applicants received funding, and 10 of those organizations were supported using the funds contributed by San Mateo County. The other six were supported by funding contributed by other funders.

SVCF staff organized a kickoff call with all organizations roughly two months before the election. That kickoff call included opening remarks by County Elections Department leadership, and a clear communication about the restrictions on the use of this funding.

SVCF staff also checked in regularly with each organization to ensure the work was progressing. Organizations were required to complete activity reports every two weeks indicating the number of events held, voters reached and other data. Those reports were regularly shared with County staff (primarily Sara O'Brien and Travis Dunn), and SVCF provided additional summary data on request. Several organizations used materials provided by the County in their outreach program and expressed gratitude to County staff (particularly Sara O'Brien) for their assistance.

The organizations supported by the fund were able to reach significantly more voters when they combined their outreach with other direct services such as food distributions and healthcare. Of the grantees for which we have final impact records, the 16 organizations, including the ten funded by the County, collectively reached 33,832 potential voters through canvassing or in-person events, 12,924 through phone/text banks, and 81,166 through online campaigns. The ten organizations funded directly through the county reached 15,627 potential voters through canvassing or in-person events, 4,586 through phone/text banks, and 30,122 through email campaigns. Additionally, they had a combined social media reach of 17,850 potential voters. The results exceeded expectations, considering the challenges.

These interactions were facilitated by a non-partisan, community-based organization focused on supporting and uplifting diverse communities.

SVCF has confidence that the outreach by the organizations provided San Mateo County voters with the information they needed to participate in the election with confidence and made a positive impact on the turnout in this election.

## **Recommendations for the Future**

SVCF strongly recommends that the County continues to allocate funding for community-led voter education in future election cycles. It is clear that the investments made by the County helped ensure voters in San Mateo County had the information they need to have confidence in the process.

In particular, SVCF encourages the County to consider allocating funds for this project further ahead of an election cycle, perhaps by allocating funding for two-year periods. SVCF also encourages the County to resume offering PDI access and other resources to the different organizations in the Fund. Finally, it is worth noting that once again, the assistance of County staff has proved invaluable in supporting the different voter education activities, and SVCF hopes staff time can be directed to this project in the future.

A select set of partners has emerged through this program which SVCF would strongly recommend to be future parts of any voter engagement Fund: Thrive, LWV-SSMC, One East Palo Alto and PBRC have exceeded their targets once again and have shown a deep understanding of their communities and the successful strategies they can use for outreach.

## **2024 Individual Interventions**

The organizations that were funded to conduct voter engagement used many different strategies and targeted different parts of the County. There were ten organizations funded by the County for voter engagement. Most also engaged in partnerships to amplify their impact. All directed culturally appropriate projects with extensive reach, and achieved most of their initially proposed outcomes.

The ten organizations are all named here including a brief description of their results as reported by the organizations themselves:

### **HealthWays - North San Mateo County:**

- Participated in 2 events in Daly City focused on health access resources along with reminders and support in voting.
- Reached 1,427 potential voters via text messages made by volunteers.
- Reached 1,506 potential voters over the phone.

### **Immigration Institute of the Bay Area - Countywide:**

- Utilized the Haas Center at Stanford to recruit bilingual volunteers and leaders to help support their voter engagement efforts.
- Reached 1,040 potential voters via phone banking and utilizing their contacts among newly naturalized citizens.
- Held two informational sessions with San Mateo County Elections Office staff to newly naturalized citizens around voting and answering questions related to voting.

### **League of Women Voters of San Mateo County – South San Mateo County:**

- Mailed 6,000 individually postmarked mailers to residents of North Fair Oaks, Belle Haven, and East Palo Alto with primary voter information.
- Reached 1,405 potential voters through in-person interactions.
- Tabled at locations that reflected a wide variety of age groups: tabled at Sequoia Senior High school, voter registration at Brookdale Senior Living in Redwood City, and tabled at Redwood City's Lunar New Year Celebration.

#### One East Palo Alto – South San Mateo County:

- Held weekly food distribution and voter outreach at the East Palo Alto Senior Center.
- Held a two-part Wellness Wednesday and voter outreach event at the Mouton Multicultural Wellness Center in East Palo Alto.
- Interfaced with 2,753 potential voters at in-person events.
- Targeted 11,303 potential voters and youth around voter engagement through social media platforms.

#### Peninsula 360 Press - Countywide:

- Implemented a diverse content approach deploying a printed publication, public video displays, social media, live radio, and online publications to generate voter outreach across different mediums.
- Held a voter outreach campaign during a downtown Redwood City event that reached an estimated 3,000 potential voters.
- Utilized their online publication with articles and advertisements discussing voter engagement that reached approximately 3,000 potential voters.

#### Peninsula Family Services - Countywide:

- Held two coordinated days of outreach around voter registration and general election information that reached 750 people in total.

#### Puente de la Costa Sur – Coastsides:

- Because of voter outreach Puente did on the Coastsides, they had over 60 potential voters reach out about transportation to polling places throughout the primary election.
- Held a Farm Worker Voter Education session during their Farm Worker summit that specifically dedicated time to talk about voter education resources and supporting mixed-citizen status families.
- Distributed voter education materials to 80 parents at their pre-school.

#### Rise South City – Northern San Mateo County:

- Distributed weekly voter education materials and answered questions mostly to Spanish-speaking potential voters at the South San Francisco Farmers Market.
- Talked with 100 potential voters during a door-to-door canvassing event in South San Francisco.
- Provided voter information to approximately 20 potential voters at the South San Francisco Magnolia Senior Center.

#### Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN) - Countywide:

- Led two phone banking sessions to encourage potential voters to get out the vote totaling 1,413 potential voters contacted.
- Led two canvassing days in Daly City that led to 1,459 total potential voters contacted.
- Community tabling event in Redwood City that reached nearly 900 potential voters.

#### Thrive Alliance – Countywide:

- Held three events with other community-based organizations which reached 1,033 attendees.
- Developed and distributed a voter education toolkit with help from the resources provided by the county.
- Weekly voter engagement information was sent out via an email newsletter and through social media channels totaling 35,959 potential voters reached.