

# GoVoteNYC

## Strengthening Democracy Through Civic Engagement

2021 Final Report

This report presents GoVoteNYC's impact and lessons learned in 2021. During this inaugural year, the GoVoteNYC team and grantees organized, Got Out The Vote, and built the foundation for future outreach efforts.

Recent voter turnout in local New York City elections has been incredibly low.

**1993**

was the last time the NYC Mayor was elected by at least half of all registered voters.

**1 IN 4**

registered voters voted in the general in the 3 mayoral elections before 2021.<sup>1</sup>

**14%**

of eligible voters voted in the 2017 mayoral primary.<sup>2</sup>

**25%**

of eligible voters voted in the 2017 mayoral primary.<sup>3</sup>

**14%**

of voters under age 30 participated in the 2017 mayoral general election.<sup>4</sup>

## GoVoteNYC's 2021 Funders

Altman Foundation  
Charles H. Revson Foundation

The Ford Foundation  
Jamie Rubin

J. M. Kaplan Fund

Moelis Family Foundation

The New York Community Trust  
New York Foundation

Robert Sterling Clark Foundation

Scherman Foundation

Three Cairns Group

Trinity Church Wall Street Philanthropies

## GoVoteNYC aims to:

- ✓ Increase voter participation in NYC's municipal elections and narrow participation gaps.
- ✓ Increase the capacity of NYC's nonprofits to educate, engage, and mobilize voters.
- ✓ Strengthen coordination among NYC organizations who are building a more inclusive, representative, engaged citizenry.
- ✓ Foster a "voter-friendly" ecosystem in NYC where barriers to voting are minimized and election administration is competent and fair.

The need to build robust infrastructure for voter participation has never been clearer. NYC's 2021 elections were the most consequential in a generation.

In addition to electing a new Mayor, New Yorkers chose a Comptroller, a Public Advocate, 5 Borough Presidents, and 35 City Council Members.

In this context, **GoVoteNYC** was established as a collaboration of NYC donors committed to strengthening democracy through civic engagement for the 2021 local elections.

# GoVoteNYC 2021 Grantees

In 2021, GoVoteNYC provided \$1 million in grants to nonprofit partners across NYC who work on nonpartisan activities to Get Out the Vote, and who are trusted messengers in their communities. Our grantees work in coalitions across hundreds of neighborhoods and combined on-the-ground and digital organizing to reach 2 million New Yorkers, many of whom have not voted in the past or are typically overlooked in the democratic process. Below is a snapshot of grantees and their approach to voter outreach.

Voter Education Approach Key:

● Email Blasts  
 ● Flyer/Poster  
 ○ Online Events  
 ● Phone/textbanking  
 ● Social Media  
 ● Street Outreach  
 ● Tabling  
 ● Zoom Meetings

## Brooklyn Public Library (BPL)

Brooklyn

● ○ ● ●

## NYC Employment & Training Coalition (NYCET)

Citywide

○ ●

## New York Public Library (NYPL)

Manhattan, Bronx, and Staten Island

● ○ ● ●

## Hispanic Federation

Citywide; Latinx communities

● ●

## NY Civic Engagement Table (NYCET)

Citywide

● ●

## Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition

Bronx

● ● ● ● ● ● ●

## MinKwon Center for Community Action

Citywide; AAPI communities

● ● ● ●

## NY Immigration Coalition

Citywide; Immigrant communities

● ● ●

## Queens Public Library

Queens

● ○ ● ●

Additionally, GoVoteNYC funded 2 grantees that provided technical assistance to support groups organizing efforts to engage their communities, coordinate efforts across a network, and learn from each other.

## Hester Street

**Technical Assistance:** GoVoteNYC map + dashboard with trainings for grantees; Pre and post-election convenings

## F. Y. Eye

**Technical Assistance:** Advertising across the city; Marketing materials design support



# The Impact of GoVoteNYC

With just over \$1 million, GoVoteNYC grantees conducted an extensive array of voter education events and mobilizations. Their efforts helped galvanize voter turnout in one of the city's most consequential elections, against a backdrop of widespread distrust in elections, an ongoing pandemic, and a slate of largely untested voting reforms, like ranked choice voting and early voting.


## Voter Engagement Reach

**4 mil+** New Yorkers  
**200** neighborhoods  
**ALL 51** City Council Districts

**60** grassroots partners  
**100s** of volunteers canvassing  
**8** outreach languages

**33!** candidate forums  
**70** ranked choice voting workshops  
**25** public events led by grantees

**400** social media posts across 3 networks  
**6.7k+** interactions generated in May + June  
**6 mil** followers

**79m**   
 impressions generated from Facebook ads, ethnic media, and outdoor placements, such as bus shelters and store windows.

The pandemic pivot to digital communication dramatically increased GoVoteNYC's outreach scale, complementing door-to-door canvassing. However, some grantees reported that live conversations (phone or in-person) were still the most effective way to connect with voters.

## Voter Turnout Highlights

**18**  
 City Council districts in 2021 saw an increase in the number of voters and the proportion of registered voters who voted, in all boroughs except in the Bronx.

**60%**  
 increase in Asian-American primary voters in 2021 from 2013 in the 8 Council districts targeted by MinKwon and the APA VOICE Coalition.

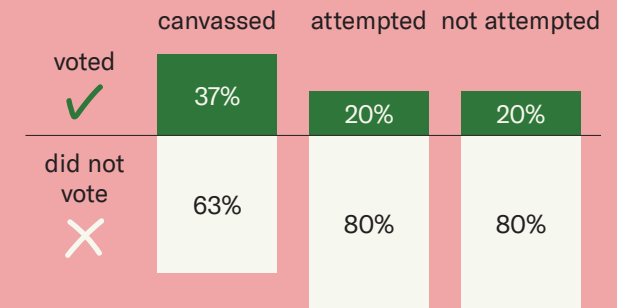
**61%**  
 of people contacted by the Hispanic Federation had not voted in the last three primaries.

**7%**  
 higher turnout for BIPOC voters who were canvassed by NYCET partners, compared to BIPOC voters who were not engaged.

**17%**  
 higher turnout by people who were canvassed by NYCET and another GoVoteNYC grantees, compared to people only canvassed by 1 grantee.

**>60%**  
 of BIPOC voters in Queens districts 20, 21, 25 and 26 and Bronx district 16 who turned out to vote were contacted by NYCET partners.

## Impact of grantee canvassing on BIPOC voter turnout



\*The chart above is filtered down to the results of GoVoteNYC grantees who were also NYCET partners on canvassing BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) voters.

\*\*These grantees are New York Immigration Coalition, MinKwon Center, Hispanic Federation, Northwest Bronx Community Clergy Coalition, and NYCET. This also includes New York Immigration Coalition's REMAP partners and MinKwon Center's APA VOICE partners.

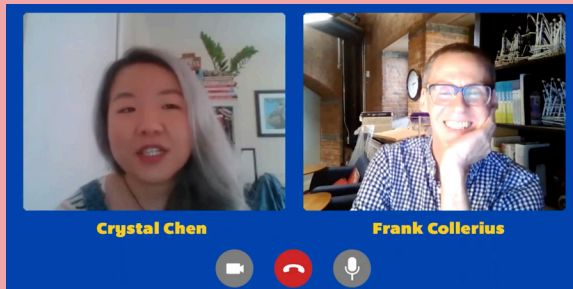
Source: NYCET

# The Impact of GoVoteNYC

## Grantee Highlights

### Brooklyn, New York and Queens Public Libraries

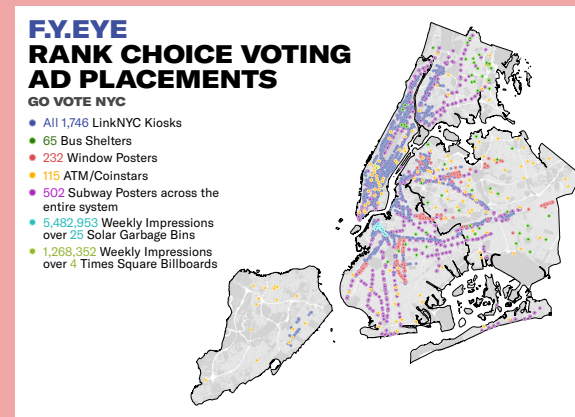
- ★ Trained hundreds of librarians on ranked choice voting to engage the public.
- ★ Organized an interactive “rank the book” contest with Gothamist with 3k+ participants.
- ★ BPL distributed 1.2k children’s books and 5k bookmarks highlighting books on voting.
- ★ NYPL’s “The Librarian is In” video on RCV had 15k link clicks and 369k+ views.



[NYPL's "The Librarian is In" video](#)

### F. Y. Eye

- ★ Placed 2.7k outdoor ads about RCV around the city: business windows, subway stations, bus shelters, garbage bins, billboards, LinkNYC kiosks and ATMs



### Hispanic Federation

- ★ Created a coalition of community-based organizations (CBOs) that met bi-weekly to discuss election information, coordinate our activities, and promote their election events
- ★ Messaged 300k NYC Latino voters with support from coalition members

### MinKwon Center

- ★ Built relationships with 9 new organizational partners serving AAPI populations in Queens during their GoVoteNYC outreach
- ★ Mobilized a strong network of 527 volunteers to support their GoVoteNYC outreach

### New York Immigration Coalition

- ★ NYC's multilingual education program established a framework for their 136 NYC-based member organizations to talk about RCV in Arabic, Bangla, English, Chinese, and Spanish

### Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition

- ★ Organized 9 candidate forums with 8.6k attendees streamed on Zoom/Facebook Live
- ★ Organized 10 ranked choice voting (RCV) workshops, which gave participants “a space to ask questions about the election from a trusted source”

# The Impact of GoVoteNYC

## Capacity Building: Tools, Training and Collaboration

In addition to outreach and engagement activities, GoVoteNYC also built the capacity of community organizations to Get Out the Vote (GOTV), using digital tools, trainings and opportunities to come together and collaborate.



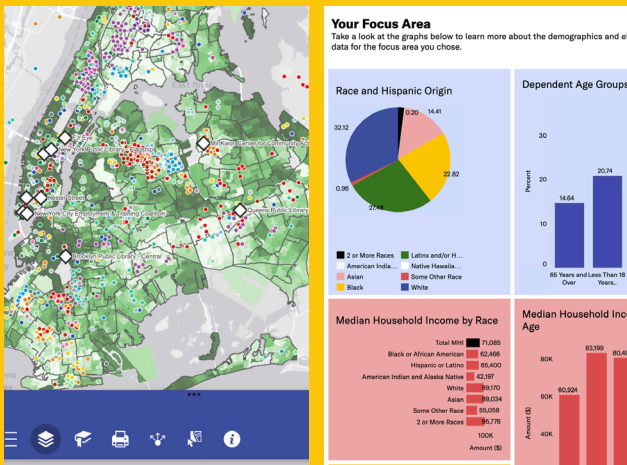
### Voting PSA Clearinghouse

F.Y. Eye's Voting PSA Clearinghouse is a free, accessible, open-source library focused on aggregating content like flyers, explainers, posters and social media posts around voting in the primary and general elections and ranked choice voting. The Clearinghouse enables anyone and everyone to contribute and access credible content, supporting community-based organizations by providing an existing trove of materials tailored for different communities in different languages that they could tap for their outreach, reducing the need to create their own.

[PSA Clearinghouse](#)

### Collaboration + Coordination

Hester Street hosted three grantee convenings from late Summer to Fall 2021. Grantees met to learn about tools like the map, dashboard and clearinghouse. They shared organizing strategies, debriefed results, and supported one another to troubleshoot issues. After the November general election, grantees reconvened to discuss successes for the cohort and think about ways to improve GOTV efforts for 2022 and beyond.



### GoVoteNYC Map + Dashboard

Hester Street developed the GoVoteNYC map and Dashboard for grantees and the general public to strategically tailor their outreach efforts across NYC. These interactive tools include voting data, city facilities, demographic data, and redistricting information, all aggregated by multiple NYC geographies. Community organizers isolated key geographies to understand compounding information in detail that informed their ongoing outreach and collaboration efforts with other groups.

[Map](#) [Dashboard](#)

### Webinars + Trainings

Throughout the Summer and Fall of 2021, Hester Street hosted webinars and trainings on how to use the GoVoteNYC Map and Data Dashboard. These conversations focused on training staff and organizers to deploy the GoVoteNYC map to increase voter outreach in the geographic area in which they work. The trainings were also integral to improving the map; Hester Street received feedback and data requests from organizations to improve the map's design and functionality to make canvassing easier for GOTV organizers.

# What's Next for GOTV?

**“[We] want to get the conversation going much earlier and ➤ build excitement. ➤ ”**

Participant at a post-election convening

**“Some things will continue to be true after 2021. Layering up contacts: sending a text, calling AND knocking on doors. As well as having Plan A, B and C in place.”**

Participant at a post-election convening

## Challenges

Looking back at 2021, GoVoteNYC grantees highlighted challenges to overcome in order to increase voter participation and strengthen their capacity to engage and mobilize voters in the future.

### Funding Timeline 💰

Grantees expressed a preference for receiving funding for GOTV work could come earlier in the year to allow for better planning within organizations, especially for outreach for primary elections.

### Pandemic Uncertainty and Pivoting ?

The COVID-19 pandemic has completely changed the way organizations conduct outreach, and the way citizens vote. “What does ‘in-person’ engagement look like?” is a question that many grantees asked as they figured out what a new normal is.

For 2022, grantees agreed they’ll need to engage people with hybrid methods such as layering up contacts, and conducting door knocking with one team while sending calls/texts with another. NYCET suggested always having a new “rainy day plan,” but specifically for COVID-19 changes.

### Voter Fatigue ⚡

Outreach in 2021 constantly needed to shift because of public health needs. Many voters expressed fatigue from all the different ways they were contacted. Younger voters requested that someone come and knock on their door as they were tired of the constant messages and on-line posts, but older voters asked for a text reminder.

GoVoteNYC grantees have found that shifting from text to phone banking has allowed them to have deeper conversations with voters.



# What's Next for GOTV?

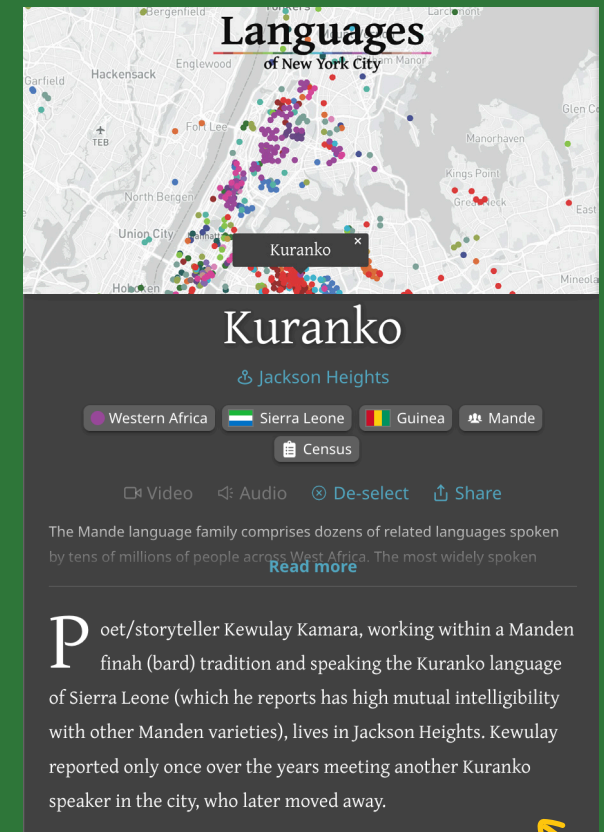
## Opportunities

GoVoteNYC grantees have tactics and ideas to jumpstart new GOTV efforts:

- ✓ Communicate how federal and state redistricting boundaries will impact people.
- ✓ Door knock for early voting in primary and general elections.
- ✓ Expand capacity for technical assistance on data and tech (i.e. VAN).
- ✓ Increase the number of languages available to serve more communities.
- ✓ Build more relationships with more organizations.
- ✓ Try out new methods of voter outreach, such as reaching out to youth on TikTok.

Grantees identified a few ways to reach first-time voters:

- 1 Ensure that communities are served in their native language. This includes all forms of outreach, online and in-person engagement, and registration forms.
  - \* Grantees highlighted the importance of a glossary that provides standard translations of election related terminology so there are no discrepancies in translations.
- 2 Get the word out to voters early, so once GOTV messaging starts city-wide, they are ready to vote. It will be important to ensure people know registration and voting deadlines.



The Endangered Language Alliance reports that there are 700 different language varieties in NYC, so the work to engage these diverse communities is critical.

[LanguageMap.nyc](https://www.languagemap.nyc)

# Endnotes

- 1 NYC Board of Elections. (2017). *Annual Report 2017*. <https://vote.nyc/sites/default/files/pdf/annualreports/BOEAnnualReport17.pdf>
- 2 New York Campaign Finance Board. (2021). *Voter Analysis Report 2020-2021*. [https://www.nyccfb.info/pdf/2020-2021\\_Voter-Analysis-Report.pdf](https://www.nyccfb.info/pdf/2020-2021_Voter-Analysis-Report.pdf)
- 3 *Ibid*
- 4 New York City Campaign Finance Board. (2019). *NYC Votes Announces Plans to Double Youth Voter Turnout and Increase Participation of Naturalized Citizens* <https://nyccfb.info/media/press-releases/nyc-votes-announces-plans-to-double-youth-voter-turnout-and-increase-participation-of-naturalized-citizens/>



This report was created by  
Hester Street for GoVoteNYC