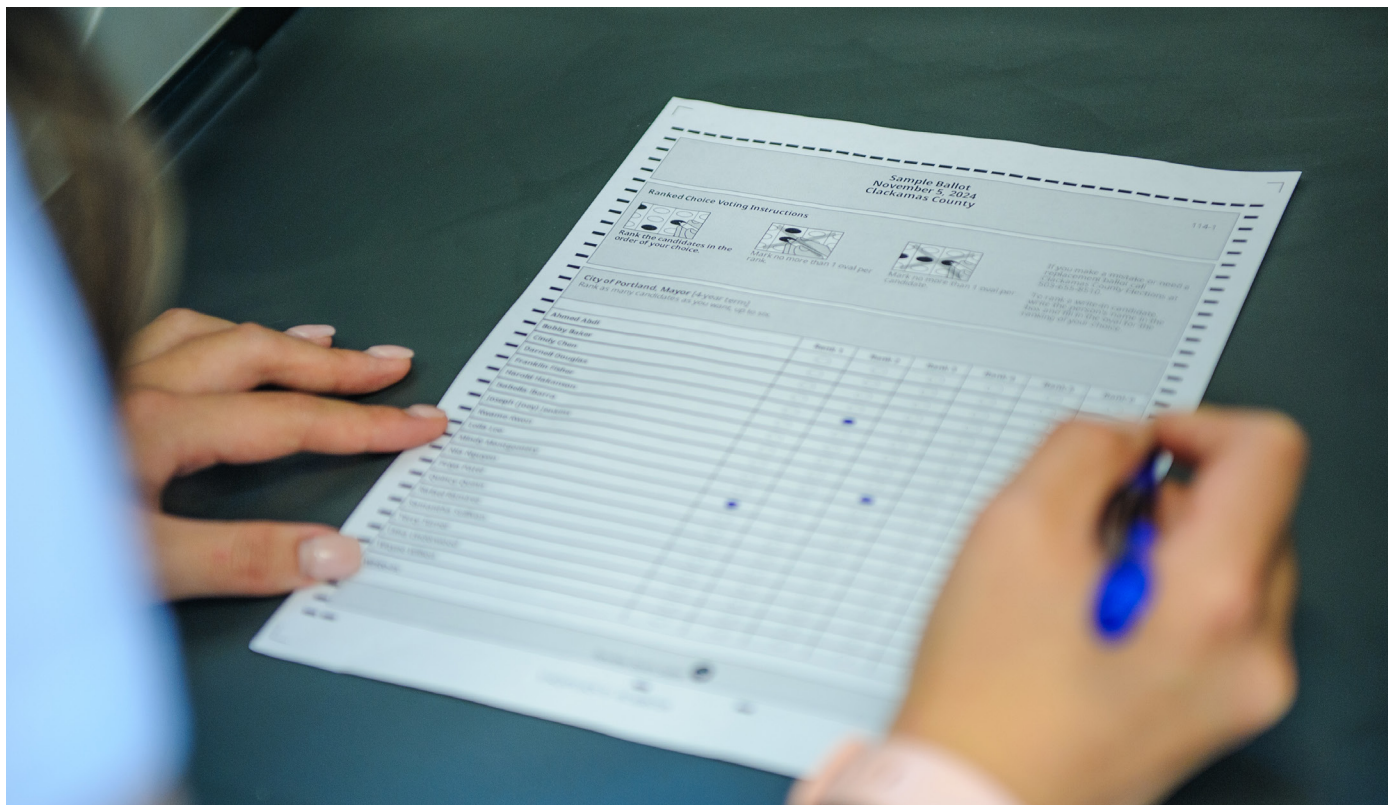


Portland Votes 2024 Program Report



January 2025

Portland
United for
Change



The City of Portland is committed to providing meaningful access. To request translation, interpretation, modifications, accommodations, or other auxiliary aids or services, contact 311 (503-823-4000), for Relay Service & TTY: 711.

Report Contents

Background Information.....	2
Citywide Voter Education Strategy	2
Portland Votes 2024 Program: Outreach to Hard-to-Reach Voters.....	3
Stakeholders/partners.....	4
Proposed Timeline	4
Scope of work	5
Voter education granting process.....	6
Voter Education Grantees	8
Supporting voter education grantees.....	9
Work of the grantees	9
Voter Education By Activity.....	10
Results and Impact.....	13
Programmatic Changes	13
Coalition Outreach	14
Grantees.....	15
Overall Success	16
Overall Challenges	18
Media	19
Recommendations	22
Conclusion	25

Background Information

In 2020 the Portland Charter Commission referred ballot Measure 26-228 to the November 2022 General Election ballot. The measure included three key charter amendments: adopt ranked-choice voting which allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference; establish four new geographic districts with three council members elected to represent each district; and establish a Mayor-Council form of government with a city council focused on setting policy and a mayor elected citywide to oversee the City operations with a professional city administrator. The measure was passed with 58% of Portlanders voting in support. The electoral reforms of Measure 26-228 were successfully implemented for the November 2024 General Election. Within Measure 26-228 there is a requirement for the City of Portland to conduct period voter education campaigns to familiarize voters with the new voting system.

Citywide Voter Education Strategy

In May 2023, the City of Portland released a request for proposals (RFP) to create and coordinate a citywide voter education plan with community partners to educate Portlanders about ranked-choice voting and district-based elections ahead of the November 2024 general election. The focus of this proposal was on educating harder-to-reach voters, including Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color; immigrants and refugees; seniors; people with disabilities; members of the City's minority language communities; unhoused and housing-insecure residents; communities with limited digital access; and residents of neighborhoods with turnout below the city average.

In addition to this programming, the City of Portland and Multnomah County also planned and executed an extensive voter education strategy, of which this program was a part of to create more comprehensive and targeted outreach and engagement with Portland communities. The City's and County's education programs used their broad communications channels, relationships with local media, access to community spaces and events, and more, whereas the harder-to-reach voters' program would be able to channel the awareness raised from these broad efforts to deeper engagement, with trusted messengers in priority communities.

The request for proposal sought a proposer who could oversee and carry out the following responsibilities:

- Develop and execute a plan for a citywide voter education campaign.
- Coordinate and align implementation of that plan across the city, working with and across sectors.
- Align the plan with Multnomah County elections.
- Support and compensate community-based organizations serving hard-to-reach voters to maintain increased capacity to engage in similar activities by identifying and sharing best practices, developing and sharing tools, templates and other materials to organizations involved in the effort.

Portland Votes 2024 Program: Outreach to Hard-to-Reach Voters

In response to the RFP, Portland United for Change engaged Democracy Rising and Brink Communications was selected. Their proposal, the Portland Votes 2024 Program, outlined a comprehensive and visible effort to educate Portland voters, with an emphasis on hard-to-reach voters. The effort focused on engaging community organizations and local media to ensure a successful election with minimal voter error or confusion, and voter trust and satisfaction with ranked choice voting (RCV). The collaborative partners brought unique and needed skills and areas of expertise to meet the requirements established for the project. As the project began, Brink Communications ceased operations. Hearts & Minds Communication was selected to take over their role on the program team:

- Portland United for Change, a fiscally sponsored project of United Way of the Columbia-Willamette, has an objective of ensuring successful implementation of City of Portland charter changes, including coalition building, community engagement, and civic education for elections.
- Democracy Rising, a fiscally sponsored project of NEO Philanthropy, has extensive experience developing voter education campaigns that recognize the expertise that exists in communities and combining that with national best practices to ensure campaigns are effective and scalable.
- Hearts & Minds Communication is a collective of communicators, designers, creatives, and strategists dedicated to working on the most pressing issues in the community. The specific project team brings a wealth of lived and professional experience to this work, including account strategy and creative leads who have a history of supporting culturally resonant, multilingual campaigns for government agencies and nonprofits.

The program team combined national best practices with local expertise to develop and implement an outreach strategy that was efficient and effective. Through this process, a series of principles that guided the proposal and program were agreed upon:

- **This project must be governed by a stance that is nonpartisan and evenhanded.** Regardless of the support or lack thereof from an individual or group, educational outreach will be targeted to all and be particularly attentive to the priority communities. In particular, communities expressing skepticism or concern about receiving information about the system.
- **Direct one-to-one voter contact will be critically important** in the successful implementation of RCV and the voter's favorable experience with the election and the results. It is the most effective way to share information and, more importantly, answer questions and dispel misinformation. This means presentations, phone-banking, canvasses, and similar communications elements.

- **Experiencing RCV can greatly help voter understanding.** In person and virtual mock RCV elections will be valuable and finding opportunities for voters to engage with the ballot greatly increases voter confidence in casting their ballot.

Stakeholders/partners

In addition to the program team there was a larger group of partners working on this program. The United Way of the Columbia-Willamette served as the fiscal sponsor overseeing the contract from the City end and navigated subcontracting as well as grantmaking for the program. The City of Portland Transition Team served as the primary point of contact for the project and managed all contracts and provided oversight on deliverables. The larger program team which assisted in planning and decision-making included representatives from the City of Portland Auditor's Office and the Multnomah County Division of Elections. In addition to this core team, the program received support and input from the Government Transition Advisory Commission and the Portland United for Change executive committee.

Proposed Timeline

- **Planning, Systems Creation, Staffing, Strategic Groundwork (November 2023 - February 2024):** This time was spent identifying and engaging local voter education partners, building out infrastructure and was intended to be the time where collateral for different campaign focuses (voters, coalition, media) was developed. Core materials such as a voter education presentation were created and tested during this period.
- **Capacity & Coalition Building: Education & Engagement Escalation (February 2024- June 2024):** This stage focused on the development of the grant application for community-based organizations, outreach to community-based organizations to inform them about the grant program, reviewing grant applications, and onboarding grantee organizations. Additionally, this phase focused on engagement of stakeholders and media to facilitate their understanding of the new election system so that in the next phase of the project they may more easily explain it to Portlanders. Notably this stage did not focus on direct outreach; direct outreach did not begin until after the May statewide primary election. This decision was made to limit potential voter confusion about which elections would be using ranked-choice voting.
- **Education & Engagement Blitz (June 2024 - October 2024):** During the period outreach was conducted through all grantee organizations. The coalition worked towards being at full capacity by the time voters received their ballots, this included ramping up voter education through coverage at targeted events and direct voter contact. Printed materials and online collateral were finalized during this period. In addition to materials design, during this time Hearts & Minds executed the first phase of the media campaign.
- **Get Out the Vote Education (October 2024 - November 2024):** Grantee organizations ramped up direct engagement with voters in the final weeks before the election to ensure voters were aware of the date of the election and to answer any lingering questions on how RCV works. Hearts & Minds conducted the second phase of the

media campaign.

- **Post Election Work (November 2024 - January 2025):** Packaging tools, templates, and other materials that can be shared with future voter education planners and advocacy organizations. Offering training and presentations sharing best practices and findings that support voter education, planning for election of 2026, final evaluation/assessment of project highlighting successes and challenges, and set of best practice recommendations for future efforts.

Scope of work

Creation of Voter Education Materials

Our team worked with the City, County, and community partners to develop unified messaging to deliver accurate, non-partisan information to the public by ensuring that messaging remained consistent. The suite of materials made available through this project included a flyer, door hanger, talking points, and a train-the-trainer presentation accompanied by a voter education presentation.

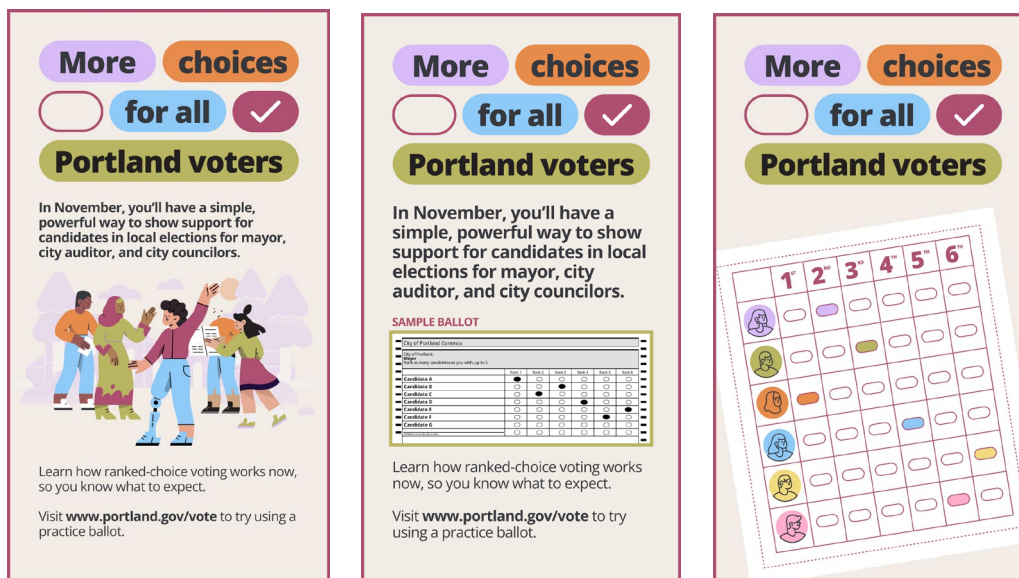
The project team combined national best practices as well as local expertise for best approaches for reaching hard-to-reach Portlanders. One of the primary best practices that surfaced through this process was that the core focus of all materials was on the voter experience. Other steps in the election process, such as tabulation, would be explained to voters in additional resources but would not be prioritized in voters' introduction to the process.

In essence, the first point of contact should only focus on the role of the voter. The team also utilized information provided by the City and County to tailor materials, media, and presentations for community organizations to facilitate conversations and education with harder-to-reach Portlanders. Additionally, the team used transcreation rather than translation to develop culturally resonant content in the six additional languages as determined by the project team in partnership with the City and County. Transcreation is a process used to repurpose source materials from one language into another that recognizes a word-for-word translation is rarely sufficient to reposition messages for a new audience. Instead, it is critical to include an assessment of cultural norms, idioms and values and develop content from scratch in consultation with native speakers.

Hearts & Minds' partners in this process were native speakers who have deep experience supporting culturally resonant, multilingual campaign development, and copy and collateral creation. Additionally, grantee organizations that engaged communities in-language were given the opportunity to review materials and ensure they would be resonant. Materials for this effort were designed in English, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean.

Voter education materials and ads leveraged the official City of Portland seal for brand consistency and to build trust with audiences. Design sets and illustrations were developed to

resonate across six languages and lived experiences of the primary audiences. The campaign's creative direction focused on the voter experience of ranking candidates on the ballot. The use of simple, resonant real-world examples and practice ballots were an essential component of the campaign's creative strategy.



Coalition Outreach

Education efforts were scaled through building a strong coalition of organizations and individuals invested in engagement and education. Portland United for Change had an extensive network of organizations committed to ensuring Portlanders are comfortable with their ballots with decades-long experience providing voter education and engagement. Based on the list of priority communities, the program team began reaching out to community-based organizations with existing relationships that would be effective for those communities. As an example, we heard particular concern about seniors being given information about voting so that they are prepared. We met with the League of Women Voters of Portland, who had an extensive record of engaging that community around voting and elections and learned about their plans for creating specialized materials for seniors. Upon learning this, the program team encouraged them to apply for funding through the program.

Voter education granting process

A key part of coalition outreach in this program was to provide community organizations with grant funding to support their voter education efforts. A grant program made available \$210,000 in funding to implement activities across the three categories of: Direct Voter Contact, Community Education, and Communications. The program team conducted outreach to the Portland United for Change coalition of community organizations as well as other community stakeholders. The grant program was publicized on the City of Portland website as well. The program team also hosted a virtual session providing any community organizations that were

interested with the program's goals and information on how to apply. Organizations interested in applying for a grant were required to submit a robust application which included work plans of the activities they would commit to, with timelines, and signed agreements for the work. In total 34 applications for funding were received.

The application review committee was comprised of staff from the program team, the City of Portland Transition Team, City of Portland Auditor's office, and Multnomah County Division of Elections. The process involved four steps:

- First, the program team reviewed all applications to verify applicant eligibility, including being in good standing with the state of Oregon.
- Second, review committee members reviewed the applications and scored them based on level of responsiveness to the established goals and outcomes stated in the RFP, and their strength and experience in addressing the program goals.
- Third, the review committee met to do an initial review of applications and select the strongest applications, using the "fist to five" consensus building model to determine which applications advanced, and which required further discussion. After this review period any requests for clarification from grantees were communicated and time was allowed to submit responses to these questions.
- At its final meeting, the review committee evaluated the responses to questions sent to grantees and defined the final list of organizations that would receive funding and what amount they would receive. After this meeting, applicants were informed of awards decisions and organizations that had been awarded grants received grant agreements within the next 30 days.

Voter Education Grantees

The following community-based organizations were selected for funding:

Organization	Grant Amount
APANO <i>Provide culturally and language-specific educational events, canvassing, digital outreach, and more to reach AANHPI communities.</i>	\$40,000
Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) <i>Provide mock RCV election sessions, ballot information, and education at cultural and community events to reach Native communities.</i>	\$40,000
Urban League of Portland <i>Engage voters at community lunch and learns, youth events, social media, and more to reach African Americans and other communities.</i>	\$40,000
East County Rising Community Projects/Ebony Collective CDC <i>Provide train-the-trainers, door-to-door outreach, mock elections, and more to reach BIPOC and East County communities and residents.</i>	\$15,000
Future Prairie and the Pacific Northwest Museum of Queer Art <i>Provide voter education through arts events, productions, networks, to reach queer artists in LGBTQIA+ and ALAANA communities.</i>	\$15,000
Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) <i>Provide town halls, mock elections, member outreach, and more to reach refugee and immigrant communities across cultures and generations.</i>	\$15,000
Latino Network <i>Engage voters through town halls, social media, training, phone canvassing, and more to reach Latino youth, families, and communities.</i>	\$15,000
Next Up <i>Provide peer-to-peer outreach, canvassing, phone banking, and more to reach young people ages 13-35 from BIPOC and other communities.</i>	\$15,000
Cascade AIDS Project <i>Provide information through existing networks, publications, and sites,</i>	\$5,000

<i>to reach LGBTQ+ people and people affected by HIV.</i>	
League of Women Voters of Portland <i>Provide education through training workshops, materials, speaking engagements to serve all residents of the City and Multnomah County, with particular emphasis on seniors.</i>	\$5,000
YWCA of Greater Portland <i>Provide outreach, education through digital communication, direct outreach, virtual events, to reach marginalized voters and communities.</i>	\$5,000

Supporting voter education grantees

Organizations that received grants were provided with:

- A full-day onboarding training.
- Monthly virtual train the trainer sessions that were open to staff and partner organizations.
- Monthly one on one meetings with the program team to discuss their progress and work through challenges.
- Access to printed materials free of charge.
- A license to the online ranked vote mock election platform (RankedVote) that provided 75 mock elections free of charge.
- A shared tracking platform to document voter education activities and share upcoming events with other grantee organizations.

Work of the grantees

Grantees were chosen for their long-standing relationships and trust in priority communities and through their planning determined a wide variety of ways to conduct outreach. A core tenant of the program was to meet voters where they are. Each grantee organization was well suited to determine where their constituencies would be and the most effective times and places to reach them.

For those with existing direct voter contact programs, like East County Rising and Ebony Collective or Next Up, this involved door to door canvassing. For organizations who oversee established community events, including APANO's Jade Night Market, Cascade AIDS Project's Annual AIDS Walk, and Future Prairie's Artist Showcases, they provided voter education to all event attendees. For organizations that offer on-site direct services, such as NAYA, IRCO, and the YWCA, they engaged and provided community members with voter education resources when those individuals were accessing other services through their organizations.

Other organizations, including Latino Network, the Urban League of Portland, and the League of Women Voters of Portland, who are known as providers of trustworthy information, provided community presentations. The list goes on, but the principle is that this funding empowered trusted community organizations to begin by incorporating voter education into their existing programming and provided the ability to develop and conduct stand-alone voter education outreach as well.

Below is a breakdown of voter education activities. The number of community members reached is referred to as impacts rather than voters or contacts. The reasoning for this is two-fold. First, many of our grantee organizations engage community leaders in their work, so while a community meeting, like NAYA's youth and elders council, may be small, the spread of information from that meeting may be vast. Second, several of the grantee organizations engaging their community may work with members of the community who are not themselves eligible to vote, like Next Up or Latino Network's outreach to students, but these activities can still have impact by sharing that information with others who are eligible. The word *impacts* was used instead of *voters* to capture the greater impact that many voter education activities had:

Voter Education By Activity			
Activity	Number of Instances	Total Impacts	Average Impacts
Canvassing (Doors, Phone, Texting)	13	13,149	1,011 contacts
Tabling	44	3,672	87 contacts
Community Event	32	4,968	177 attendees
Presentation/Training	109	4,470	41 attendees
Volunteer Recruitment	4	7,114	1,778 contacts
Email	16	10,239	682 contacts
Social Media Post	20	3,134	156 interactions
Mock Election	25	2,141	85 participants
Total		48,887	

Media

Together with the City, our team engaged culturally specific media and ran a paid communications campaign to ensure citywide coverage of the new voting system. We leveraged

the expertise of Hearts & Minds for culturally specific and paid media and collaborated with the City and County to cross-reference individual media plans to maximize coverage. There are numerous community specific outlets, like newspapers, that could be leveraged; however, an analysis of advertisement funding and reach of outlets led Hearts & Minds to recommend prioritizing media platforms with the largest reach.

Hearts & Minds leveraged deep expertise in in-house public relations and strategic communications, community engagement, media strategy, media buys, and implementation to ensure that voter education efforts were effective and wide-reaching. Hearts & Minds centered its approach on audience analysis and an initial discovery phase that ensured audiences were met where they are based on media consumption research.

The media plan had two distinct phases:

- Phase 1: Education and confidence building: Build confidence in the new voting procedure and address barriers for those who may not initially understand or trust it.
- Phase 2: Drive potential voters to the City of Portland's landing page to access tools and resources around ranked-choice voting and district-based elections. In particular, this phase focused on encouraging voters to fill out a practice ballot.

The media plan included outreach in several different mediums to meet voters where they are. This included in-language radio, paid search, social media ads, and digital display. Radio ads were written by Hearts & Minds and then recorded by grantee organizations to ensure information was coming from trusted voices in the community. Below is a breakdown of the different mediums that were utilized and languages each tactic engaged.

Channel	Language	Flight 1	Flight 2
Digital Display			
Programmatic Display	English, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese	\$35,000	\$20,000
Terrestrial Radio			
iHeart, JAMN107	English	\$10,000	
Bustos, KGDD	Spanish	\$5,000	
Social Animated			
Meta	English, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese,	\$25,000	\$15,000

(Facebook/Instagram)	Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese		
Total		\$90,000	\$50,000

Results and Impact

Programmatic Changes

It is important to note that after the Portland United for Change proposal was awarded, there were two substantial changes to the team supporting this program.

Shifting from Brink Communications to Hearts & Minds Communications: In September of 2023 Brink Communications ceased operations, after their program team had already begun to develop a workplan. This change happened very suddenly and required team members from Portland United for Change and Democracy Rising to quickly develop a request for proposals to replace Brink. The program team narrowed responses to three possible firms and discussed each firm's proposals with city and county staff. Ultimately Hearts & Minds Communications was selected to take over the print and digital media components of the contract. Hearts & Minds team members were able to get up to speed very quickly; however, this shift and the time it took to amend the initial contract with the City of Portland, greatly impacted timelines for materials development for the project overall and the work on this portion of the project did not begin in earnest until the first quarter of 2024.

Staff changes within Portland United for Change and the City of Portland Transition Team:

In March 2024, the Coalition Director of Portland United for Change left the organization for another opportunity. This position had served as the primary point of contact with the City and County as well as the facilitator between Portland United for Change, United Way of Columbia-Willamette, and subcontractors. All contracts between the City of Portland, United Way, and subcontractors had been executed at this time, so the role of this position was to manage the grantmaking process between United Way and community-based organizations. In response to this shift, the program lead from Democracy Rising took over as the point of contact for the contract and the project. This change decreased the size of the program team and impacted the number of staff based in Portland; however, the program team received ample support from the City and County staff, as well as Portland United for Change's Executive Committee to ensure this did not disrupt the timeline or function of the program.

In addition to the changes within the program team, there were temporary changes in staffing of the project within the City of Portland team. In April of 2024 the point of contact for the contract shifted temporarily. While both members of the transition team did an excellent job coordinating with the program team, the shift required time for getting up to speed and at times resulted in a lack of clarity about the contract and uncertainty about where responsibility would lie within the City and program team to bottom line deliverables.

Materials Development

The process of developing written, digital, and printed materials for the campaign was conducted over three months. This process was initially supposed to begin in early 2024 but because of the shift from Brink Communications to Hearts & Minds, this process was delayed by

several months. The program team, in consultation with the City and County, determined that this process would require the same amount of time as anticipated before the shift, which would delay materials being prepared for deployment. English materials were developed in early June, reviewed by grantee organizations in late June, and were finalized in early July. Transcreated materials were completed in mid-July, reviewed by grantee organizations in late July, and finalized in early August.

While this timeline may not have been ideal, overall, the materials received overwhelmingly positive feedback. In particular, the focus on the voter experience and leaving out descriptions of the counting process in frontline materials, which allowed for easier conversations with voters. Transcreation was smooth and there was little negative feedback received on the materials created in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Russian. Largely, the feedback received from grantee organizations on non-English materials was the need for additional languages to be included in the future. The languages most commonly referenced were Somali, Arabic, and Tagalog. While the City of Portland website could be translated into eight languages, the efficacy of the transcreated print materials and demand from community means it would be worth investing in additional languages for transcreation.

In August 2024, the City of Portland as well as Hearts & Minds were able to arrange for materials to be printed and distributed to grantee organizations free of cost. Printing can be a daunting cost for smaller organizations and the hope was to lift that pressure so that outreach post-Labor Day would be easier to navigate and that organizations could invest in other program expenses so that their activities would reach more community members. While the intent of this undertaking was good, the rollout was difficult and put undue pressure on grantee organizations as well as the program team. Each organization shared their printing needs based on language and which of the specific print materials they would use most.

The coalition manager received feedback that the City of Portland building was not a particularly accessible location so having another site for pick up would be preferable which led to APANO, one of the grantee organizations, using their space and staff time to distribute materials. This staff time and effort for APANO created understandable frustration and made accessing materials more difficult for other grantee organizations. In the future any printed materials should be delivered or shipped to grantees rather than the unnecessary burden of having to retrieve them.

Coalition Outreach

The goal of a comprehensive voter education campaign is to find multiple routes to reach the priority communities. Collaborating with community-based organizations allowed for voter education information to be received from trusted messengers. Within this program, a trusted messenger is defined as people regarded by community members as credible sources of election information. While government entities are often able to reach communities broadly, they often lack the relationships and history to be seen as trusted messengers and are often viewed with mistrust from communities who have been historically neglected or harmed.

Community-based organizations often exist to address needs government can't or hasn't filled. These organizations are fully immersed and in touch with the priority populations the program sought to engage and allowed voter education to be more effective and engaging.

Outreach conducted by the coalition of grantee organizations was the most direct channel to reach voters in this program. This means it had the greatest impact, but also posed a great deal of challenges and constantly changing circumstances. Direct conversations with voters are by far the most effective in ensuring the voter leaves with a clear understanding and allows for questions to be answered in real time, rather than the voter needing to do additional research or ending an interaction confused. These activities can respond directly to misinformation and allow voters who have been educated through the program to become vectors of trustworthy information in the community. The daunting task of getting voters' attention on local issues with a backdrop of a presidential election and several very competitive state and local elections and initiatives was no small task. Grantee organizations did a very effective job of building education into their existing outreach priorities and found additional ways to reach their audiences.

Feedback from grantee organizations highlights the delicate balance of reaching voters when they are primed to receive information with the challenge of mounting election fatigue as the campaign season wears on. In the planning and launch stages of this program, the internal program team determined that based on the level of funding awarded to grantee organizations, a reasonable success metric for success would be 30,000 Portlanders reached by voter education activities. This was not a requirement of the contract, but it felt important to have a benchmark to work from both to gauge how the program was functioning and to assess the program for future implementations. Grantee organizations exceeded this expectation and ultimately reached more than 48,000 voters.

In addition to the direct engagement grantee organizations conducted, the most profound impact of this work is the ripple effect of the outreach, such as students learning about elections at school and telling their parents, or an elder attending a community event and sharing that information with their peers and family. By engaging trusted messengers in this work, we created additional trusted messengers. This impact is nearly impossible to track but profoundly important to building trust in the process and working to build engagement in future Portland elections.

Grantees

Below are some highlights of the outreach grantee organizations conducted to meet voters where they were and provide essential information about the election process.

- APANO was able to engage their APANO Vote Network of organizations that work with smaller, language-specific communities. APANO provided in-language training to organizations that engage the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean communities. Through these efforts, voters received in-language education from organizations solely focused on their community.

- Future Prairie hosted three Queer Community Artist Showcases that centered the values of voting and democracy, while also including ranked-choice voting information for all attendees. This effort engaged communities in a creative and exciting space to hold a deeper, values-based conversation, while also providing key information for participation.
- East County Rising and Ebony Collective hosted events at the Rosewood Initiative and Portland Saints Love Day Center to provide residents of East Portland who may not have received information about the election with accessible information where they were.
- Next Up deployed 17 youth organizers to give presentations in Portland schools, reaching over 1,000 young people, 460 of whom signed pledges to vote.
- NAYA provided voter education to their Portland Youth and Elders Council, creating a space where questions could be asked and answered without judgement and bringing together longtime residents and voters with first time or future voters.
- The YWCA of Portland created and shared a toolkit of ranked-choice voting educational resources with each of its 45 fiscally sponsored projects.
- Cascade Aids Project distributed voter education information at their four in-person locations and ensured that all food boxes distributed by Esther's Pantry in September had printed voter education materials in them.
- The Urban League of Portland hosted regular "Reclaim Your Vote" trainings and engaged partner organizations such as Imagine Black to host these training sessions as well.
- Latino Network provided training and voter education resources in Spanish and English to their Academia de Líderes program, a group of grassroots leaders in the Portland area Latino community.
- IRCO engaged community members in numerous languages at each of their health clinics as well as community health fairs, instilling the value of civic participation as an indicator of public health.
- The League of Women Voters of Portland conducted a staggering 166 in-person presentations to Portlanders, with particular focus on presenting to senior centers, religious and educational organizations, and community groups.

Overall Success

- **Success of a first time initiative:** This program was the first of its kind in Portland. Many voters had never experienced outreach that was focused simply on education around the system, rather than telling them who or what to vote for. For many, this allowed them to engage more easily without the pressure of feeling pushed to support a candidate or policy. Grantees and program staff were building scaffolding for the program while it was in

progress, which posed challenges but also allowed for experimentation and creativity. Additionally, it helped organizations to either improve or develop internal systems and identify gaps. This project was a large undertaking for grantee organizations and nearly all of them left interested in continued engagement around voter education, with clear ideas of how the work that was done this year could be built upon.

- **Strong focus on Districts 1 & 2:** Many of the grantee organizations highlighted that their efforts were predominantly focused in Districts 1 and 2. These districts have the highest concentration of BIPOC voters and non-English speaking Portlanders. While their feedback highlighted that there is a great deal of work to be done to overcome systemic barriers to participation and mistrust of government, grantees have begun to create a model for how that work can be effective and provided recommendations for scaling outreach efforts in subsequent election cycles. None of the grantees or the program team were under the illusion that this program was going to solve these deep-rooted issues of inequity; however, grantees cited how this work headed off misinformation and planted the seeds for further engagement.
- **Strong Public Interest:** Grantees overwhelmingly reported that there was a great deal of interest in learning about ranked-choice voting. Voter education efforts were met with enthusiasm and curiosity, and by and large voters left interactions voicing gratitude for the information-sharing. There was so much interest from other community groups that at times grantee organizations lacked the bandwidth to take advantage of every outreach opportunity.
- **Transparency Built Trust:** Access to information about the election allowed grantee organizations to build trust within communities. As an example, the willingness of the Multnomah County Elections Division to provide tours of their facilities to grantee organizations allowed them to go into the community and provide assurance that while elections may be changing, there were systems in place to ensure it went well.
- **Moving From Skepticism to Confidence:** Many grantees reported that their targeted audiences initially expressed a great deal of skepticism or wariness about the new system. Through their outreach efforts, particularly community presentations, many of these initial concerns were assuaged and voters left feeling confident in their ability to fill out their ballot correctly.
- **Including education in existing events proved very successful:** Community gatherings are often a celebratory and exciting space to introduce voter education. It is a way to include this vital information without pulling the focus from the spirit of the community event. Some examples of existing events where grantees were able to infuse voter education were
 - Portland Pride Festival & Parade - Cascade Aids Project, East Community Rising, and the Ebony Collective were able to table throughout the weekend.

- APANO's Jade Night Market - this annual event attracts an average of 15,000 attendees. Multiple organizations had tables providing voter education materials.
- Next Up featured a ranked-choice voting mock election at their BIPOC Youth Music festival and provided voter education at community rallies around climate issues.
- Several organizations built voter education into their back-to-school activities and larger scale events like Portland Welcome Week.

Overall Challenges

- **Timing:** Grantee organizations expressed that the compressed timeline of the program made sense when it came to voter interest and awareness but made the planning for the work difficult. Because the focus of many organizations is not just elections, balancing existing programmatic priorities and services with voter education activities was difficult. In addition to organizations' scheduling posing difficulties, the delay in having digital and print materials available in English and additional languages limited organizations' ability to conduct effective outreach throughout the summer.
- **Number of candidates:** Because every elected seat in city government was open in this election there was an unprecedented number of candidates. Voters found the sheer number of candidates overwhelming. While this feeling allowed grantee organizations to highlight how having ranked-choice voting allowed for more choices, the number of candidates posed a challenge for voters, particularly receiving enough information about who was running to feel confident in their rankings.
- **Election fatigue:** In a presidential election year, with several statewide races and initiatives, and the large number of local candidates, some voters began to lose interest because of the overwhelming amount of outreach they were receiving. This made some voter education tactics less effective than they would have been had they not been competing with so many interests.
- **Siloing:** At the onboarding training for grantees each organization shared their general approach to voter education and laid out the key components of their programming. In the moment there was discussion about opportunities to collaborate, however, because the program was run with individual check ins between grantees and the program team, there was not as much opportunity for organizations to hear about what each other were doing other than monthly email updates. Several organizations had existing relationships, which allowed more contact but in the future it would benefit the program to have more structured time as a coalition to share plans, experiences, and open the door for more collaboration.
- **Mistrust:** Many grantee organizations cited mistrust in city government as a

major barrier to success in their programming. This required organizations to address larger historical trauma before any conversation about the election could be effective. This was exacerbated by communities being particularly wary of outreach around elections when they otherwise feel neglected by local government. This challenge underlines the importance of this kind of work but also underscores the need for more time and investment in this kind of work.

- **Limited Funding:** The program received 34 applications, each of which had a unique perspective and approach for reaching the community. During the review process several members of the team shared a wish that there was more funding to allow for more applications to be selected. Narrowing down the field of applications was an extremely difficult task and the program would have benefitted from more applications being selected. In addition to selecting more applicants, many of the grantee organizations that were selected shared that they would have benefitted from additional funding to scale their education efforts and account for staff time.

Media

The implementation of the media program achieved the proposed goals and, in many cases, exceeded expectations. [The full report on the program can be found here](#). Each aspect of the campaign will be broken down but overall, this program reached a very broad audience, raising awareness, and encouraged deeper understanding by directing voters to the City of Portland's ranked-choice voting landing page for more information.

Language	Total Impressions
English	10,696,740
Spanish	1,616,290
Vietnamese	192,870
Russian	192,389
Korean	118,942
Simplified Chinese	94,792

Digital Outreach

Each form of digital outreach was measured against standard benchmarks based on Hearts & Minds data from previous campaigns. Below are a list of terms and definitions for these benchmarks.

- Impressions: The number of times an ad is shown.
- Clicks: All clicks on the ad (people who clicked through on our ads and went to the landing page).
- Click through rate (CTR): Clicks/Impressions. Particularly important on search and animated display channels.
- Video completions: The number of videos that are watched to completion.
- Video completion rate) (VCR): The ratio of videos that are watched to completion (100%) vs. video starts. On social media ads, this reflects the level of engagement with the content

Paid Search

Paid search was used to support awareness-building tactics and connect potential voters to the City's website efficiently. Connecting members of our audiences after they've gained awareness from the City's summer campaign through search terms and keywords. Tactics for this platform included keyword targeting and zip code targeting with a goal of reaching all potential voters in the area who are trying to learn more about the election and ensuring they are met with trustworthy information. This aspect of the campaign was incredibly effective and overwhelmingly outperformed benchmark metrics and ultimately drove over 10,000 clicks to the ranked-choice voting landing page. This program was particularly effective in the final days before the election; over 40% of impressions came in the two weeks leading up to election day.

Platform	Start Date	End Date	Impressions	Clicks	CTR	Benchmark
Google Search	8/19/24	10/7/24	81,107	9,557	11.81%	4.41%

Meta

Utilization of the most common social media apps allowed us to tap into key platforms where members of high barrier/low awareness audiences are most active. On Meta, the campaign demonstrated a strong reach of voter education information to audiences in languages other than English. During the campaign, more than 30% of impressions came from languages other than English, with a particularly high level of impressions from Spanish speaking audiences. Overall, these ads had higher clickthrough rates in languages other than English and were a very effective way to provide basic awareness and information and encourage interest in learning more from the audience.

Platform	Start Date	End Date	Impressions	Video Completions	Completion Rate	Benchmark
Meta	9/3/24	11/5/24	4,972,435	52,316	17.13%	4%

Programmatic Display

This aspect of digital outreach was primarily intended as a complement to other work, scaling our message and reaching thousands of websites online reaching members across our audiences. These ads appeared on an embedded ads network as well as 44+ display ads exchanges to scale our reach. (Display ad exchanges are virtual marketplaces where publishers and advertisers connect to buy and sell digital ad space without the need for an intermediary.) Our digital banner ads were shown on thousands of websites that reach our audiences, including online editions of many communities' specific publications. This platform consistently performed better than its anticipated benchmark and was particularly effective in the days leading up to Nov. 5, when many voters were conducting online research about candidates and issues on their ballots.

Additionally, in the final days before the election there were reports of an increase in calls with questions to the Multnomah County elections office, programmatic display ads were focused on the zip codes where the most questions were coming from. In just the five days before the election, voters in this area were served additional display ads which resulted in just over 650,000 impressions.

Platform	Start Date	End Date	Impressions	Clicks	CTR	Benchmark
Programmatic Display	9/3/24	11/5/24	7,858,481	7,060	.09%	.08%

Radio

Leverage radio partners to reach BIPOC, Spanish-speakers, seniors, and those less likely to engage through digital platforms. This part of the campaign used pre-recorded interview segments with grantee organizations to address major points around ranked-choice voting in a friendly way. These interview segments were recorded and placed on JAMN 107.5, which has the largest BIPOC reach in the Portland metro area, and Bustos, which has the largest Spanish language reach in the Portland metro area. Between Sept. 3, 2024 and Oct. 7, 2024 there were 157 commercial spots aired on Bustos and 164 commercial spots aired on JAMN 107. While data on the reach of each of these commercial spots is not available, anecdotally the community leaders that voiced the spots received positive feedback from community members.

Recommendations

- **Increased Funding:** While this program was largely successful in its goals, it is apparent from election results that there is much more work that needs to be done to ensure all Portlanders have the information they need to engage in local decision making. As an example, District 1 had higher undervoting rates than other city council districts. Additionally, mistrust of government and elections based on historical trauma will not be solved in one election cycle. The most effective solution to mistrust is relationship building through consistent direct engagement with priority communities. When it comes to paid media, Hearts & Minds was limited in the number of community specific outlets that could be engaged with the funding for paid ads. Instead, the program team had to prioritize the media platforms and outlets that reached the most people to maximize the money spent. Additional funding would've allowed for additional communities and languages to have had paid media focus.

Limited funding is particularly stark when it comes to direct engagement of communities. Several grantee organizations went above and beyond the deliverables they included in their grant proposals to ensure their communities were supported but there was only so much that could be done with \$5,000-\$40,000 per organization. Many organizations' observations confirmed a programmatic guiding principle that in person conversations were most effective; however, they are the most expensive. According to Glassdoor, the average salary of a community organizer in the U.S. is \$56,000 a year. The period of this grant would translate to just over \$23,000 for one organizer's full time. Only three organizations received funding that covered that rate, and for many grantee organizations there were several staff members engaging on this project. This does not include any of the costs for events and additional program needs. Several organizations highlighted that their programs would've benefitted from hiring staff specifically to conduct this outreach, both to expand capacity but also to ensure firewalls existed between any 501(c)3 and 501(c)4 activities. An example comes from Latino Network, they were hoping to have an organizer specifically dedicated to providing voter education to Latino youth in the community, however, the funding they received was not enough to cover this position. Increased funding would allow for the deep engagement that is necessary to build trust in communities that have historically been marginalized.

- **Extended timelines:** Timing when it comes to voter education is a delicate balance to strike. The planning and infrastructure building takes more time than most expect and voters' attention is a precious resource and finding the right time to engage is difficult. Additional funding would allow community organizations to engage in more intentional planning processes and an extended timeline would allow for that planning to be reviewed by both program facilitators as well as the city and other grantee organizations. One pain point in priority communities was the feeling that there is only outreach about participation when it comes to elections; however, many grantee organizations reported a disinterest from the community about the election until they had their ballot in hand.

For future iterations of the program the work may be more effective if there is a structure well in advance of the election for planning and execution in both timing and funding. Several organizations expressed that there would have been a benefit to a set period of time for planning activities where there could have been collaboration between their teams and the program teams to define metrics and deliverables. Additionally, this planning time could serve as a good opportunity for organizations to engage with one another and discuss the possibility of collaboration. This planning period could culminate in re-submission of applications so that the updated deliverables are clearly defined and approved by the program team.

- **Defined Metrics and Deliverables:** This was a first of its kind project for the city, contractors, and grantee organizations, without existing benchmarks for voter education around city elections, it was difficult to determine what success meant for all grantee organizations. Without this clarity, measurement was done by activities, rather than the number of voters impacted. While this worked in some respects, the number of people impacted by grantee organizations varied widely. Defining metrics to go along with tiers of investment would allow for easier assessment of success, need for improvement, and failure. With any extended planning, the inclusion of quantifiable metrics should be prioritized.
- **Define clear boundaries between 501(c)3 and 501(c)4 organizations without limiting avenues for education:** This program was met with skepticism by some stakeholders. Because the nature of the work focused on specific communities, there was a sense by some that this outreach could easily cross the line into campaigning on behalf of the charter amendments themselves or candidates. The efforts of grantees to maintain a strict separation from any advocacy or campaign-related activities was commendable; however, the rigidity that this program required between educational and advocacy activities stifled some key opportunities for education. There were organizational partnerships and educational activities that grantees were interested in pursuing but because of the need to create a strong firewall between the two they could not be pursued under this program. As an example, the Urban League of Portland held a series of Meet the Candidates events which allowed voters, particularly in Districts 1 & 2 to learn more about candidate priorities, however, because candidates were involved this was not deemed a permissible activity within the grant funding. The Urban League of Portland conducted these events anyway, because they provide a service to the community, but it could not be included in their impact for this funding.

Additionally, many organizations in Portland, grantees included, house a great deal of their direct voter contact programming and associated staff in their 501(c)4 entities. There does not appear to be a great deal of direct voter contact capacity in many community-specific 501(c)3 entities based in Portland. That may change over the coming years, but it seems that other projects requiring direct outreach allowed for there to be times where 501(c)3 entities take the lead on tactics and programming but when it comes to outreach and education there can be a handoff to the 501(c)4 so they can do

the direct outreach. It may be too simplistic, but this program would've benefitted with more trust in organizations' judgement when it came to navigating their organizational structure. Finally, the concern around funding organizations that had both a 501(c)3 and 501(c)4 limited the organizations that applied for funding and impacted how organizations were considered during the review process.

- **Building In Collaboration:** In the onboarding process of the project, the program team allowed organizations to share their preferences about how to engage with the program throughout the grant period. As is completely understandable, there was a preference for fewer meetings. Additionally, with the different tiers of funding, it did not make sense to require the same amount of staff time from organizations receiving smaller grants. To accommodate this preference, the program team developed systems that relied on grantees tracking their activities in a way that was visible to other organizations but did not include regular meetings. In hindsight, this hindered grantee organizations' ability to spend time discussing their work and creating additional opportunities to collaborate.

Instead, this structure put all responsibility for coordination on the program team, which was not as effective or efficient. Additionally, this process created silos between grantees and other members of the program team, such as Hearts & Minds. In the future there should be a required monthly meeting for all grantees and subcontractors to share updates on their work, discuss successes and challenges, to find places where there may be potential duplicative efforts, and to discuss opportunities to collaborate or strategize together.

- **Continued off-cycle engagement:** Many organizations shared that one of their primary challenges was addressing communities' mistrust in government. In addition to this mistrust, there were feelings of tokenization in communities because outreach only occurs around election cycles. Finding ways to engage the program's priority communities outside of election cycles will build trust and make voter education much more effective. This kind of programming is more likely to be led by the city, but finding ways to engage community-based organizations outside of election cycles would bolster these efforts. The primary tactic that comes to mind with this programming is continued use of rankedvote.co to lead mock elections; however, there are several creative ways to incorporate voter education around ranked choice voting into other programming. If the City is planning on continuing its relationship with rankedvote.com, a service they could provide to community organizations is to help with mock elections or internal decision-making processes. Offering the platform free of charge to community members would encourage ranked-choice voting in more community decision making processes and keep awareness present even if it is not a primary focus outside of election years. While funding for this kind of work is typically limited to when the public is most interested, it is certainly worth considering funding engagement work year-round to ensure conversations about elections and governance stay present in Portlanders' minds. Finally, this kind of work allows for a great deal more creativity in tactics and can be done without any concerns about the activities of an organization's affiliate 501(c)4.

Conclusion

The program team would like to extend deep gratitude to each of the grantee organizations, as well as the City and County staff that made this program a success. While there is still a great deal of work to be done, exit polling shows that a majority of Portland voters found the process simple, and overwhelmingly voters trusted the results of the election. As we move forward and begin to think through the next implementation, we hope that this report can provide a roadmap for continued engagement and trust building within the community.