



request for proposals

San Mateo County Voter Engagement
2020 Initiative

San Mateo County Voter Engagement 2020 Initiative

Introduction

Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) addresses our community's most challenging problems. Despite the area's great wealth, residents are challenged by so much – lack of affordable housing, financial instability, the precarious safety and insecurity of immigrants and persistent gaps in student achievement. Through its discretionary grantmaking, the community foundation addresses these and other issues including support for people to engage in civic affairs and the public decisions that directly affect their lives.

SVCF is delighted to be partnering with San Mateo County on a special grantmaking opportunity to increase voter engagement in the March 2020 election. Through this special grantmaking opportunity, grants of up to \$20,000 will be provided to organizations for projects that engage voters innovatively and effectively. By issuing this request for proposals (RFP), we hope to solicit the best ideas from nonprofits, public agencies, research institutions and community organizations serving San Mateo County.

We invite you to apply.

Grant Application Deadline

Grant applications must be submitted through our online application system.

Apply SVCF, by 11:59 p.m. (PST) on Wednesday, December 18, 2019.

The Problem

Voting is the most fundamental element of participatory democracy, yet historically, turnout figures have been very uneven across communities. For example, in 2018, while turnout in San Mateo County overall was roughly 73 percent, many parts of the county reported turnout below 50 percent and while other precincts reported nearly 90 percent turnout.¹ These polling results mirror statewide ones showing that voters tend to be whiter, wealthier and older than California's general population. Barriers that keep low-income people and people of color from voting, such as longer lines at the polls², higher vote-by-mail ballot rejection rates³, and limited attention from political campaigns⁴ are well

¹ <https://www.smcacre.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/nov18precinctreportfinal.pdf?1544123110>

² Famighetti, C., Melillo, A., & Perez, M. (2014, September 15). Election Day Long Lines: Resource Allocation. Retrieved from <https://www.brennancenter.org/publication/election-day-long-lines-resource-allocation>

³ Romero, M. (n.d.). Disparities in California's Uncounted Vote-by-Mail Ballots: Youth, Language Preference and Military Status. California Civic Engagement Project, 2014(3). Retrieved from [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57b8c7ce15d5dbf599fb46ab/t/5881a085e6f2e1da63d758ed/1484890251195/CCEP_VBM_Issue_Brief_3_Revised_\(1\).pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57b8c7ce15d5dbf599fb46ab/t/5881a085e6f2e1da63d758ed/1484890251195/CCEP_VBM_Issue_Brief_3_Revised_(1).pdf)

⁴ Johannesen, J., & Pillsbury, G. (2015, December). Engaging New Voters: The Impact of Nonprofit Voter Outreach on Client and Community Turnout. Retrieved from <https://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2015/12/engaging-new-voters.pdf/>

documented. This is problematic, as major offices will be elected at all levels of government in 2020, and if these patterns hold true in San Mateo County, then the policies of the county, cities and districts will not reflect the community's diversity of perspectives.

The Opportunity

There are many opportunities for voter engagement in San Mateo County, including the March 2020 election, recent state and local government reforms as well as community-based organizing strategies to increase voter turnout, particularly among underrepresented groups. San Mateo County continues to lead the way in implementation of the Voter's Choice Act (VCA), which aims to engage residents in the design of election plans and allow voters to cast their ballots on different days and in different ways. In 2018, with the help of the public, San Mateo County was one of the first five California counties to pilot the VCA. Successful implementation of the VCA is especially critical as the 2020 election approaches and residents will vote on many important issues related to education, housing, transportation and others. Additionally, recent philanthropic investments in nonpartisan voter engagement in underrepresented communities across the United States have led to new successful strategies for reaching infrequent voters through online and in-person outreach led by trusted messengers.⁵

Program Goal

SVCF and San Mateo County believe that all residents should have the power to engage in elections and have a voice in their government. Our goal is to inspire greater civic participation and to ensure our democracy represents all voices and perspectives. SVCF has chosen to focus this grant opportunity on the following:

1. **Supporting community education** programs for underrepresented voters in San Mateo County to learn more about the voting process, issues on the ballot and their rights at the polls.
2. **Organizing nonpartisan outreach** programs to remind voters to cast a ballot and of the importance of weighing in on local issues.

The objective of this RFP is to support voter engagement primarily targeted in precincts with low voter turnout. In doing so, it is critical that any grants offered through this RFP strictly avoid any partisan activity or advocacy on behalf of any candidate or issue on the ballot. Project descriptions will be reviewed to ensure that actual or perceived conflicts of interest are actively avoided. Grantees shall not expend any portion of the grant award for political advocacy efforts, whether for or against a political candidate, ballot measure or bill. Furthermore, grantees shall not expend any portion of the grant award to inhibit or promote religion or convey a religious message. By using an RFP approach, SVCF aims to solicit the best thinking of nonprofit service providers, research institutions and other entities serving San Mateo County.

⁵ Paschall, K. (2016). How Integrated Voter Engagement Builds Power and Changes Policy. Responsive Philanthropy, 2016(1), 3–4. Retrieved from https://www.ncrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/RP_Winter15-16_Paschall.pdf

Key Dates

November 25, 2019:
Application process opens

December 18, 2019,
11:59 p.m.:
Proposal submission
deadline

January 2019:
Announcement of grant
awards

Application Process

- 1) Review reference materials**, including SVCF's research brief on Promoting Civic Participation Through Open Government. These may be found at siliconvalleycf.org/grants
- 2) Participate in an information session.** This is highly encouraged for those responding to this RFP. Because all grant applications are submitted online, these sessions provide an overview of SVCF's online application system, **Apply SVCF.**

Additionally, the information sessions will provide an opportunity for applicants to review the RFP in more depth and ask questions. Register for an information session:

- **Tuesday, November 26 at 1 p.m.** – online only – **Register here.**
- **Monday, December 2 at 1 p.m.** – Sobrato Center for Nonprofits, Harbor Room, 350 Twin Dolphin Drive, Redwood City – **Register here.**
- **Thursday, December 5 at 11 a.m.** – Conference Room, Daly City Community Service Center (first floor- across from City Hall), 350 90th Street, Daly City – **Register here.**

- 3) Submit grant application**, including required attachments, through our online application system, **Apply SVCF, beginning November 25, 2019.** **Applications must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. (PST) Wednesday, December 18, 2019.** A guide to the online application system can be found **here.**

More specific questions about project eligibility, proposal process and evaluation can be addressed through phone calls and in-person meetings with the program officer, as time permits.

Proposal Eligibility Criteria

- Organizations serving San Mateo County. Organizations headquartered outside San Mateo County may apply but should demonstrate significant service to the region or partner with a local organization that can.
- Organizations with a 501(c)(3) designation, those that have a fiscal sponsor with a 501(c)(3) designation, public agencies, collaborations of nonprofit and public agencies, or other entities that have a designated charitable purpose.
- Organizations that do not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, citizenship status, creed, religion, religious affiliation, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, veteran status or any other protected status.
- Organizations with religious affiliations will be considered for funding only if the project for which they seek support addresses the needs of the wider community without regard to religious beliefs.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

SVCF awards grants on a competitive basis. Successful proposals will need to meet the minimum eligibility criteria and provide a clear and compelling narrative about how the proposed project will advance the field. Proposals should clearly identify where activities will take place within San Mateo County by listing the precincts within the county. Proposals will also be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Clarity of project description and strategies/activities to be implemented to reach desired outcomes.
- Relevant and measurable outcomes and indicators of success.
- Strategies that are based on well-tested models and can be scaled or expanded regionally, while maintaining local relevance.
- Achievable timeline that corresponds to the key activities.
- Organizational capacity to implement project including: staffing, leadership, operational and fiscal management.
- Established track record of work related to proposed project or likelihood of success with a new project.
- Ability to leverage financial, human and technical resources from other partners leading to greater impact.
- Ability to contribute successes and lessons learned with the field.
- Experience in providing services and/or conducting outreach in targeted precincts.

Awards

Up to \$20,000 will be awarded to non-profit organizations in San Mateo County for outreach grants for the March 2020 election cycle, with some exceptions for larger grants or collaborations of groups. Applicants should also include a budget narrative that makes clear the necessity of the project's specific line-items.

Please note that project proposal narratives may be posted publicly on our website to reflect our value of transparency and encourage learning among grantees, future applicants and the community at large.

Review and Selection Process

SVCF staff review all proposals; those recommended for funding must be approved by SVCF's Board of Directors. Applicants may receive a site visit, telephone call and/or other type of communication from SVCF staff as part of the review process.

Applicants will be informed of grant decisions in early January 2019.

Evaluation, Monitoring and Grantee Learning Activities

Grantees will be expected to meet SVCF's reporting and evaluation requirements as well as be willing and available to talk with SVCF staff and donor advisors if requested. Grantees will also be asked to participate in periodic meetings to share information on project successes, challenges and lessons learned to further the overall program goals of this RFP.

Grantees may be invited to participate in convenings and/or technical assistance opportunities to enhance voter engagement efforts. Grantees may be also invited to collaborate in research projects that add to the body of knowledge about voter engagement, particularly in low turnout communities.

Thank you very much for your interest in responding to this RFP and in joining us in promoting civic participation through open government. We look forward to reviewing your proposal.



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About Silicon Valley Community Foundation

Silicon Valley Community Foundation advances innovative philanthropic solutions to challenging problems. We engage donors and corporations from Silicon Valley, across the country and around the globe to make our region and world better for all. Our passion for helping people and organizations achieve their philanthropic dreams has created a global philanthropic enterprise committed to the belief that possibilities start here. Learn more at siliconvalleycf.org.

More Information

If you have questions, please contact us at grants@siliconvalleycf.org or call 650.930.9885

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Proposals accepted November 25, 2019 through
December 18, 2019, 11:59 p.m.