

# BUILDING SMALL DONOR POWER AND LASTING SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Democratizing Philanthropy Project shifts power to chronically underfunded, historically excluded frontline organizations by helping them build long-term, reliable small donor revenue and a dynamic, engaged base.

Specifically, we work to:

- help organizations test and build new approaches to earning revenue, especially with small and mid-level donors;
- boost the skills, confidence and organizational capacity of organizations to successfully execute small and mid-level donor strategies;
- build momentum within the sector by cultivating a thriving community of practice, where strategies, peer support and learning can happen amongst staff who are raising small and mid-level donor resources.

## WHY WE DO IT

Many nonprofits depend heavily on grant-based income, meaning most of their revenue is restricted. We believe that by growing lists of supporters and working to convert those lists into active member and small to mid-level donors, organizations will build their power by reaching more people and build sustainable revenue streams to support their work over time, making them less reliant on traditional philanthropy to respond to the urgent needs facing their communities.

While small dollar fundraising is generally embraced by nonprofits, big gaps prevent Black and brown-led, grassroots nonprofit organizations from accessing this type of revenue generation.

Democratizing Philanthropy Project seeks to bridge those gaps and create the conditions so that this work advances at a pace and scale that results in meaningful impact.

**2023**

## BY THE NUMBERS

Building off our most productive year yet, 2023 brought greater depth of learning, diversification of donors, and new partners across the country, despite 2023 being a tough year for fundraising, with individual giving down by three percent.<sup>1</sup> Participants brought energy and enthusiasm as we collectively built a strong base of power heading into 2024.



**\$2.5M+**  
Dollars Raised



**14,729**  
Small Donors



**36**  
Organizations Engaged



**190K+**  
New Email Subscribers



**5**  
Cohorts



**113**  
Participants

## HOW WE WORK: LEARN BY DOING

Democratizing Philanthropy Project creates cohort-based growth experiences for organizations around the country. We feature topics like organic fundraising, list building, and donor conversion to open access to new types of resources through accelerators and springboards.

### ACCELERATORS

In 2023 we expanded our flagship accelerator program to include both 101 and 201-Level Cohorts:

#### 101 COHORT

We were fortunate to have 14 new-to-us organizations join our 101 accelerator from September to December, 2023. These groups featured a mix of workers rights and state-based organizers. Through this foundational accelerator, organizations experienced a deep introduction to fundraising—including a list buy with our partner, Daily Kos, onboarding new subscribers, and guidance on building a long-term donor engagement strategy.

#### 201 COHORT

Cue the encore! For the first time ever, we invited organizations that had previously participated in an accelerator to join us for a highly experiential follow-up program. This program allowed organizations to identify a unique challenge to tackle from March to June, while learning about new tactics for small donor cultivation like peer-to-peer texting campaigns and direct mail campaigns. Participating organizations also got hands on access to wealth screening software, which was used to learn more about their small donors and identify opportunities to upgrade them to medium or high-level donors. DPP provided both operating and unrestricted funding for the 12 organizations that were eligible and joined for the 201-Level Cohort.

In the year ahead, we are excited to complement these skills-based accelerators with a deeper focus on relationship cultivation—both with new donors and with fellow power-building organizations.

### SPRINGBOARDS

We started our first springboard in 2022 with 14 organizations and four returned this year for our 201-Level. This cohort experimented with elements of time and scale, completing a small—but challenging—list buy in just two months.

We also organized our first rapid response cohort. Three workers rights groups came together to start a fund in support of Starbucks and Amazon workers who were laid off for their attempts to unionize. DPP funded a large list buy and provided coaching to inspire 35,000 new email subscribers to take action in support of the displaced workers. By capitalizing on a moment where people around the country were paying attention to an important issue, the rapid response cohort truly springboarded into action.

In the year ahead, we are eager to build springboard cohorts that also serve as learning communities, with self-paced options for courses, live webinars, and networking.

*“When we started working with DPP, our capacity was limited. The cohort allowed us to experiment, talk to people, and share our ideas. We now have a steady drumbeat of donors to boost our fundraising. We can attribute much of that to the lead-generation activities we’ve learned in the cohort.”*

JEREMY ZISKIND

Senior Development Manager  
PICO California

Are you interested in learning about our future cohorts? Contact us at [hello@democratizingphilanthropy.org](mailto:hello@democratizingphilanthropy.org)

# POWER PROGRESS

## END OF YEAR GIVING: POWER PROGRESS CAMPAIGN

The Power Progress campaign is a unique collaboration between philanthropy, nonprofits, and the Democratizing Philanthropy Project. The three-month, end of year experience is part educational program, part capacity-building experience, and part public awareness campaign—all designed to support dozens of historically excluded frontline organizations working on critical issues across the United States. Donations secured during the campaign are also eligible to be matched by Democratizing Philanthropy Project, amplifying the impact of small dollar revenue.

### POWER PROGRESS 2023 BY THE NUMBERS



**17**

Organizations  
Involved



**\$533K+**

Dollars  
Raised



**9**

Training  
Sessions



**29%**

Increase in  
New Participants

### BUILDING A MOVEMENT



“Through PowerProgress 2023, we were able to launch our new giving society called Kind Partners on Giving Tuesday. It’s entirely powered by small-dollar donors. In the two weeks since we launched, we’ve already added 100+ donors to the organization and raised over \$30,000. We were not expecting the response we got, but that goes to show how all the tools DPP shared with the cohort have paid off.”

**JUAN BENITEZ**

Chief Advancement Officer  
Texas Health Action and Kind Clinic

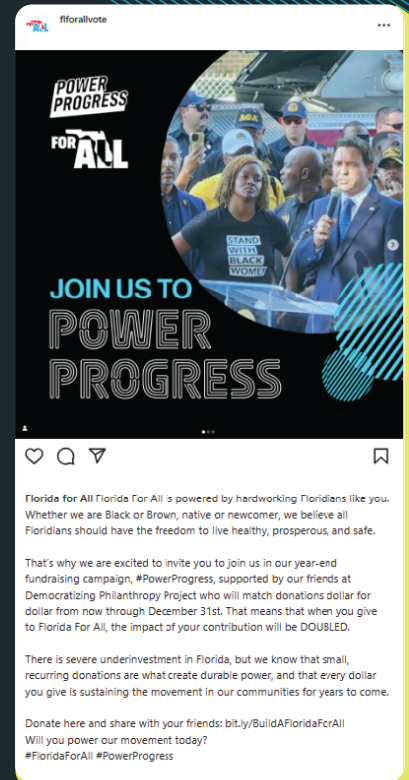
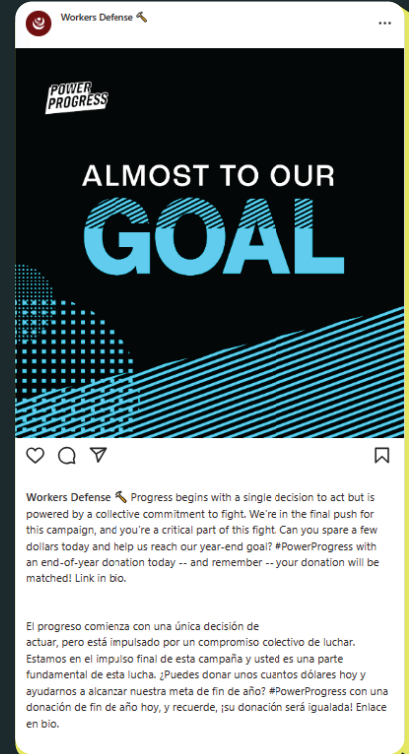


**NEW VIRGINIA MAJORITY**  
Democracy. Justice. Progress.

“With DPP’s support and through the Power Progress campaign, we achieved our most successful fundraising year yet. 43% of our individual donors lived in Virginia—helping us expand our state-wide base of support—and 244 new donors gave in 2023. In total, we saw a 240% increase in small donor fundraising from 2022.”

**SARA DERISO**

Development Associate  
New Virginia Majority



## SCALING GROWTH SPOTLIGHT: CASA OVER THE YEARS



By participating in Democratizing Philanthropy Project's cohort-based learning over time, frontline and historically excluded organizations build and continue to scale their independent power and revenue streams. Now three years into cohort-based learning and participating in the Power Progress campaign, CASA is making strides—increasing its staff and organizational capacity, deepening connections with donors, and growing its revenue base. CASA is a national organization dedicated to building power and improving the quality of life for working-class Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and immigrant communities. Since 2021, CASA has partnered with DPP through multiple cohorts, including Accelerator 101 and 201, Power Progress 2022 and 2023.

Through these experiences, CASA was excited to learn, experiment, and implement new techniques. "It's all about optimizing what we're doing," says Jhosse Rivera, Manager of Individual Giving.

"We want to figure out what works best for our audiences, drive deeper connection, and bring in new donors. With DPP's expertise and support, we are not afraid to try new things."

Each cohort also grants access to videos, toolkits, and other resources that CASA has shared and adapted within their organization. The ability to integrate these best practices across the entire organization—rather than siloed within one team—has been a huge asset. "As a manager, the ability to share DPP resources with my colleagues has been a powerful professional development tool. In total, we've had seven different team members benefit from learning with DPP."

Above all, CASA emphasized the value of the DPP network and team of experts involved in each cohort. over the past three years "There is so much noise around best practices but having the examples given to you by experts, peers, and coaches, makes it more accessible. DPP brings examples to life."

## SUPPORT OUR WORK

Organizations never pay to participate in Democratizing Philanthropy Project cohorts, accelerators, or springboards. Instead, we compensate participants for their time and raise funds to match the donations they bring in. This is made possible by generous support from our funders. If you are interested in learning more or underwriting this important work, contact [hello@democratizingphilanthropy.org](mailto:hello@democratizingphilanthropy.org) today.



*"There are too few organizations in our field focused on the financial health of our sector, and the revenue model that powers all the aspects of our work. It's time to come off the sidelines of DPP's work and dig in fully to what's possible here. It's time to take this project to scale."*

VIVIAN CHANG  
Executive Director,  
Democratizing Philanthropy Project